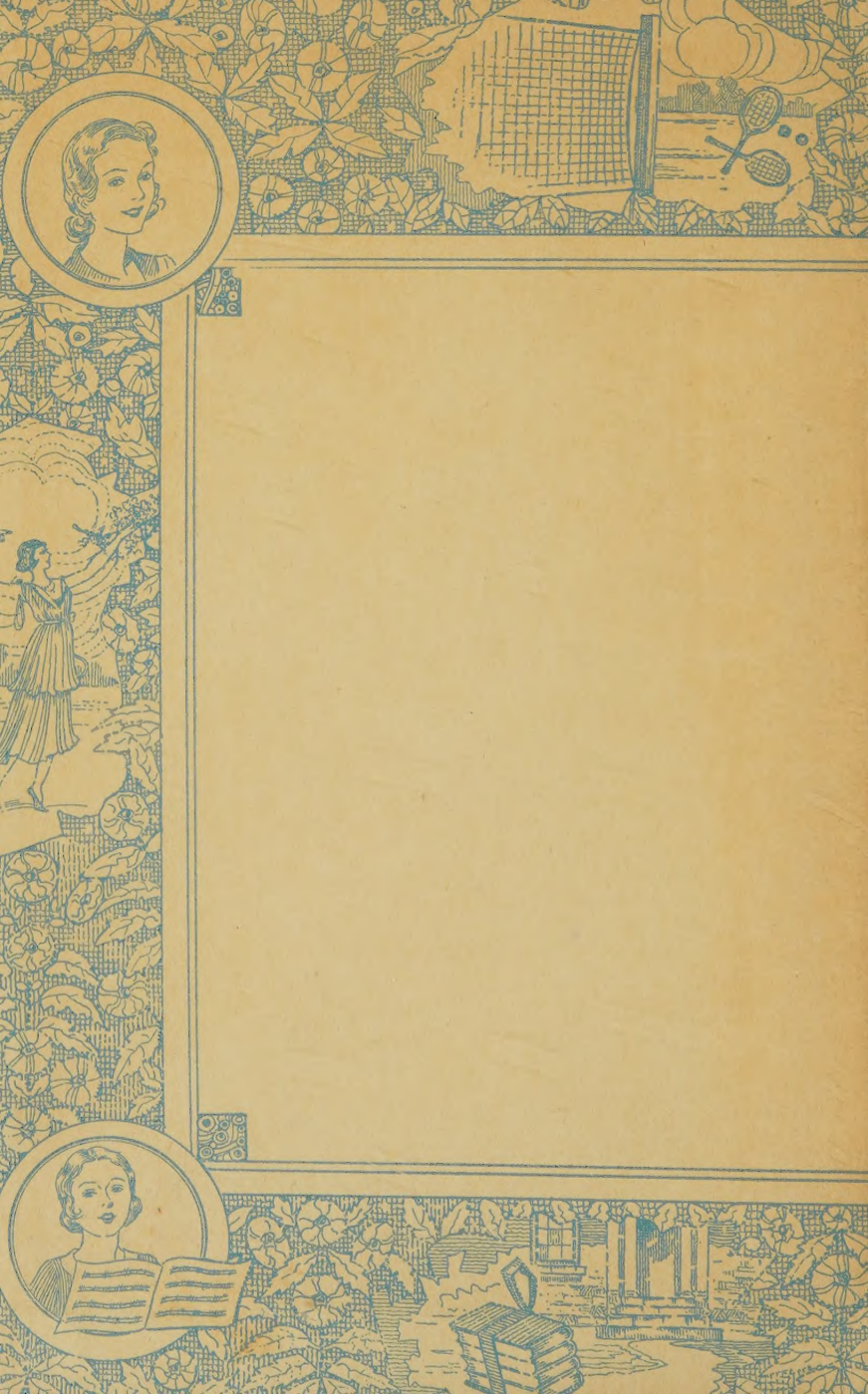
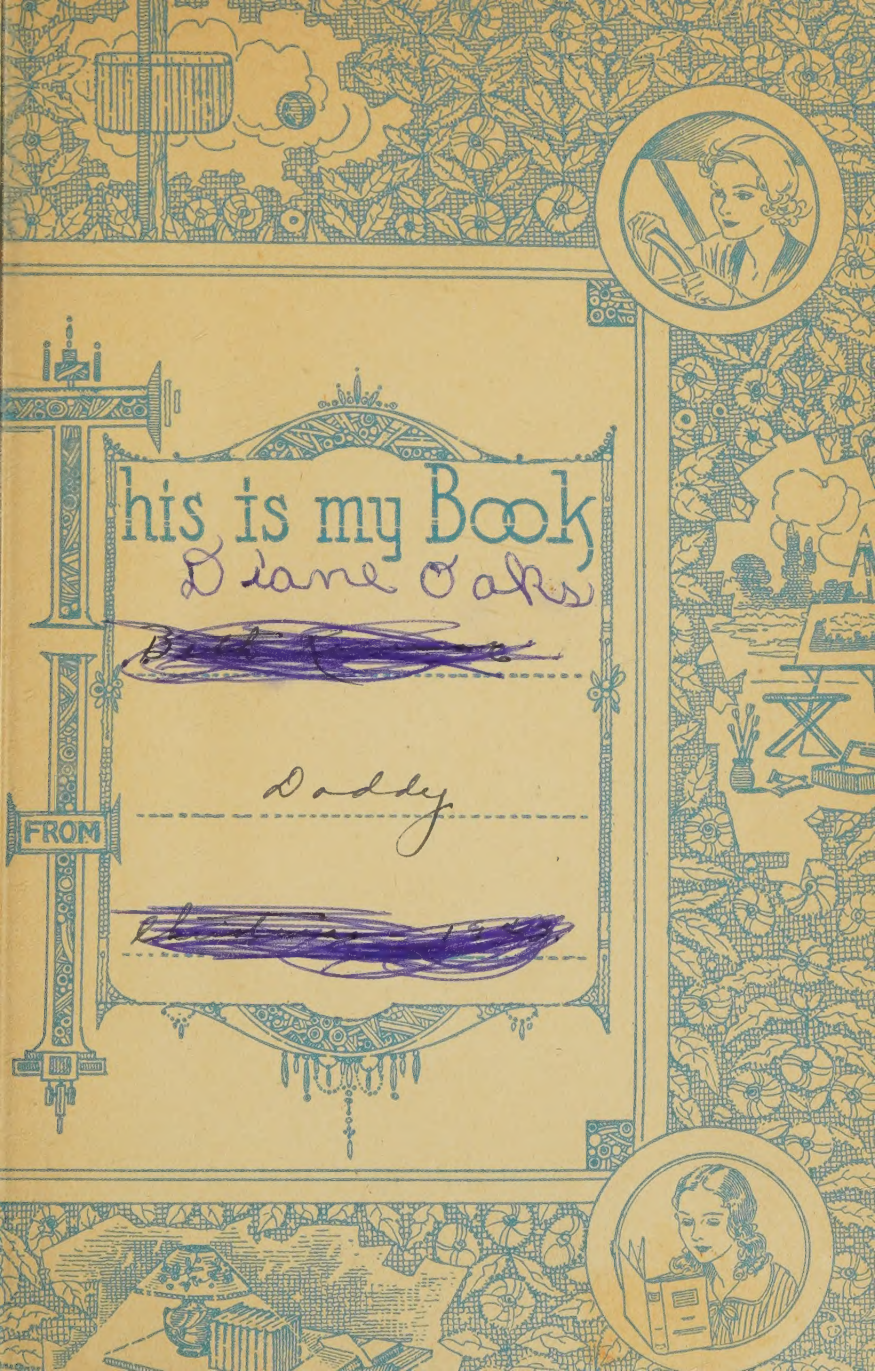
The CURLYTOPS AT SILVER LAKE

HOWARD R. GARIS




This is my Book
Diane Oaks
FROM
Daddy

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ON CHUGGED THE MOTOR BOAT, AND SOON IT WAS ALONGSIDE THE SAILBOAT.

The Curlytops at Silver Lake

THE CURLYTOPS AT SILVER LAKE

OR

On the Water with Uncle Ben

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

AUTHOR OF "THE CURLYTOPS SERIES," "BEDTIME STORIES," "UNCLE WIGGILY SERIES," ETC.

Illustrations by
JULIA GREENE

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THE CURLYTOPS SERIES

By HOWARD R. GARIS

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THE CURLYTOPS AT CHERRY FARM
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THE CURLYTOPS AT SILVER LAKE
Or, On the Water With Uncle Ben

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THE CURLYTOPS AT SILVER LAKE

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THE CURLYTOPS AT SILVER LAKE

CHAPTER I

SKYROCKET IS GONE

"MOTHER, make Trouble stop!"

"What is he doing now, Janet?" asked Mrs. Martin, looking up from her sewing and across the table to where her three children were playing a button game.

"Oh, he's doing *everything!*" said Teddy, shaking a finger at his funny little brother, who was smiling and holding something in his tightly closed fist. "He's got some of my buttons, and he——"

"Yes, and he knocked a lot of my buttons down on the floor," added Janet. "And he——"

"I must have all de wed buttons!" interrupted Trouble himself. "Wed buttons all

mine—I goin' to put 'em on a stwing!" and the little boy, whose name was William, but who was more often called "Trouble," made a grab for another red button which he saw in a pile in front of his sister Janet.

"Don't take that!" cried Janet. "Ma—I mean Mother—please make him stop!" and she tried to push Trouble's hand away.

"Wed buttons all mine!" cried Trouble, just a trace of tears coming into his eyes.

"No, Trouble," said Ted, more gently. "Let sister have the red buttons. We're playing a game with them. I'll let you take all the white buttons!"

"I want wed buttons!" wailed Trouble, and as he still tried to get a handful of them from Janet, and as Janet was doing her best to stop William from doing this, there was a little scramble at the table. Trouble's hand slipped, the buttons slid across the smooth oak boards and fell with a clatter to the floor.

"There! Now look what you did, Trouble Martin!" cried Janet, as she leaned back in her chair. "All the nice buttons are on the floor!"

Trouble seemed much surprised by what he had done. He opened his fat little fist,

and out rolled more buttons, some of which rattled to the floor.

"Oh, Mother, he's spoiling all our game!" said Janet. "Please make him stop!"

"I'll pick up the buttons," said Teddy, with a sigh. "I guess this is about fifty times I've done it to-night."

"Oh, hardly as many as that, I think," said his mother, with a smile, as she thrust her needle into the cloth she was sewing. "You must not exaggerate, Teddy."

"What's zaggerate, Mother?" asked Janet. "Is that a new game you can play with buttons?"

"No, dear," answered Mrs. Martin, as she laid aside her sewing and looked at the clock. "To exaggerate means to tell what isn't exactly so so as to make anything seem bigger than it is. Now I don't really believe you have picked the buttons off the floor more than five times to-night, have you, Teddy?" she asked.

"Well, maybe it was—maybe it was—*six!*" replied the curly-headed little lad.

"And you said *fifty!*" laughed his mother. "That's exaggeration—making a thing too big, Teddy, my boy!"

"Mrs. Henderson that lives across the

street is zaggerated, isn't she, Mother?" asked Janet, as Teddy was busy picking up the buttons Trouble had knocked to the floor.

"Mrs. Henderson exaggerated? Why, Jan, what do you mean?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"I mean she's awful big—fat, you know," explained the little girl. "She's zaggerated all right, isn't she?"

"Oh, it doesn't mean *that* at all!" said Mrs. Martin, trying not to laugh. "And you mustn't say 'awful' when you mean only 'very much,' Janet. That's exaggeration, too. But, Trouble, I think it's time for you to go to bed. I'll take him upstairs," she said to the two older children, "and then you can play your game a little longer without any one to bother you. Come, Trouble, dear!"

"No! Don't want to go to bed! I want wed buttons!" and the little boy tried to reach over the table to where Ted had placed a pile of buttons of different colors.

"No, William! Come with mother," said Mrs. Martin quietly. When she used any of the children's real names—such as William, Theodore or Janet, instead of Trouble, Ted

or Jan, the little folks knew Mrs. Martin was in earnest and that it was useless to beg further. Trouble heard his right name spoken and he gave a long sigh. Bedtime had come after a long, happy day.

"Could I have one more wed button?" he asked wistfully.

"No more," answered his mother.

"All wite. Den I go to bed!"

He slipped down from his chair, as Ted began putting the buttons from his mother's mending bag into two piles, so that he and Janet might go on with the game.

"Give sister a kiss!" begged Janet of Trouble.

He held back a moment, as if he had not quite forgiven her for not letting him have all the fun he wanted, and then he held up his chubby face.

"That's a good boy!" said Janet as she kissed him. "I'll let you have a lot of red buttons in the morning."

"Night-night!" called Trouble to Ted, as the older boy began counting out the buttons.

"Night-night," echoed Ted, as he wiggled his fingers in a funny fashion at Trouble.

As Mrs. Martin took William up to bed, Ted and Janet started their game over again.

It was a simple little game. They spread out on the table all the buttons from mother's bag. Then they divided them into two piles, each taking one.

Janet would then take a button from her pile and hold it in her hand with her fingers closed over it so Teddy could not see it.

"Guess what color it is!" Jan would say to Ted.

"Black," he might answer, or perhaps he would say red, blue, or white—whatever he thought it might be. If he guessed the right color Janet had to give Ted five buttons of the color he had guessed. If he said the wrong color he had to give Janet seven buttons of any color she wanted.

If Ted guessed right, then it was his turn to take a button and make Janet guess the color of it. But if he guessed wrong it was his sister's turn again. And so they played the game, taking turns this way, until they were tired, or until one of them had all the buttons on the table.

It was this game they had been playing when Trouble, or Baby William, made the trouble by wanting all the "wed" buttons.

They played the little game for some time, having lots of fun, and Ted had just taken a

number of buttons from Jan when their mother came softly down the stairs.

"Is Trouble asleep?" asked Janet.

"Yes. And it will soon be time for you two Curlytops to go upstairs too," said Mrs. Martin, as she took up her sewing again. "Even if it is vacation time, I can't have my Curlytops staying up too late."

One needed to take only one look at Ted and Janet Martin to know why they were called "Curlytops." It was because their heads were covered with pretty tight little curls of a golden color.

"We'll play three more times," said Ted. "I'll have all Jan's buttons by then."

"It's my turn to win, now!" laughed his sister.

They traded more buttons, first one and then the other guessing right, and finally, with another look at the clock, Mrs. Martin said:

"Come now, Curlytops! Off to bed with you!"

"Can't we stay up until daddy comes home?" asked Ted.

Mrs. Martin shook her head without looking up.

"Please!" begged Jan. "You know he

said he might tell us where we were going to stay this summer. He said so when we were eating supper."

"Yes, I know he did," said Mrs. Martin. "But daddy is late to-night. He may not be home for an hour yet, and I can't have you staying up until then. You can find out in the morning, if he knows then, where we shall spend the summer vacation."

Ted and Jan looked at one another. They were about to make one last appeal to be allowed to stay up, but a glance at their mother showed them that she would not give in to them.

"Do you think we'll go to a nice place this vacation?" asked Janet.

"Oh, yes, I think so," answered Mrs. Martin.

"A place where there's water, and where we can go in swimming, and have a boat and go camping and—and all that?" asked Ted eagerly.

"Oh, dear me!" laughed Mrs. Martin, "I might just as well let you stay up playing the button game, as to let you ask me so many questions.

"Now run along to bed, both of you! As soon as daddy has made up his mind where

we'll go for the summer vacation we'll tell you. Maybe you'll hear in the morning. But go to bed now, like good children!"

There was no staying up after that. But Teddy suddenly thought of something.

"Oh, Mother!" he cried, "may Jan and I just go and look to see if Skyrocket is all right? I put a new piece of carpet in his box to-day for him to sleep on, and I want to see if he likes it!"

"Oh, yes, please! I want to see, too!" begged Janet eagerly.

"Well, you may take just one look at Skyrocket," agreed Mrs. Martin, "and then come straight in and go to bed!"

"Yes'm; we will!" promised Ted. "Come on, Jan!"

Skyrocket was their dog; a dear, curly, black fellow, and all three children loved him. While Skyrocket, I am sure, felt that nowhere in the world were there such delightful children as the Curlytops and little Trouble. Skyrocket slept in a box in the woodshed, just outside the kitchen door.

Out to the shed hurried Ted and Jan. It was a little after eight o'clock, and just getting dark.

"Do you think Skyrocket will like his new

carpet?" asked Jan, as Ted opened the door.

"I guess so. I knocked all the dust out so he wouldn't sneeze. Carpet dust makes you sneeze, you know. It made me sneeze when I was knocking it out of Skyrocket's carpet."

Together the Curlytops opened the woodshed door. At first they could see nothing, because it was rather dark inside. There was only one window, and when the children had stood still for a moment or two they could see this window, and also the pile of wood and other things in the shed.

"Are you all right, Skyrocket?" asked Ted.

"Don't you like your new carpet-bed?" asked Janet.

There was no answer. Of course the Curlytops did not expect their dog to answer in words, but whenever they spoke to him he always either barked softly, whined or thumped his tail on the floor. That was all the answer they expected.

But this time there was neither bark, whine nor thump of tail. All was quiet within the woodshed.

"Hi, Skyrocket! Are you all right?" asked Teddy, speaking louder.

"Maybe he's asleep," suggested Jan.

"If he is he'd wake up when I called him," returned Ted. "Dogs don't mind being woke up. Sometimes they sleep with one eye open anyhow. I'll call him again. Hi, Skyrocket!" he exclaimed. "Skyrocket, are you all right?"

There was no bark, no whine, no thumping of tail.

"Maybe he likes his new bed so much he doesn't want to wake up," said Janet.

Teddy paused a moment to think this over.

"Maybe," he said. "But I wish he'd come out and see us. I'm going in to see if he's all right," he added.

Together the Curlytops stepped within the woodshed. They could see quite well now, from the faint light that came in through the window, and they looked over to where Skyrocket's sleeping box was, in a corner.

Stooping down over the box, Ted put in his hand. He expected to feel the soft, fluffy back of Skyrocket. But, instead, his hand only met the carpet which the little boy had folded and put in the box that afternoon to make a soft bed for his pet.

"Is he all right?" asked Janet.

"He—he isn't here at all!" exclaimed Ted.

"He isn't *here*! You mean *Skyrocket* isn't here?" cried Jan.

"Not in his box," added her brother. "You can come and feel for yourself."

Janet did so. She faced Teddy in the half-darkness of the woodshed.

"He—he isn't in his bed," she whispered. "But maybe he's hiding from us under the wood. He does, sometimes."

"If Skyrocket was here he'd be jumping all over us now," said Teddy in a strangely quiet voice, and Janet knew her brother was right.

They could not go near their pet without having him leap all about them, and sometimes climb half over them, in his joy at seeing them. Now there was no Skyrocket in the woodshed.

"He—he's gone!" said Teddy, and his voice trembled. "Skyrocket is gone, Janet."

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed the little girl. "Let's go and tell mother!"

CHAPTER II

THE QUEER MAN

"MOTHER, he's gone!" cried Ted, as, followed by his sister Janet, he hurried into the house.

"Who is gone?" asked Mrs. Martin, who had begun to put away her sewing, for she had done enough that evening.

"Skyrocket is gone!" added Jan. "He isn't in the woodshed, and the window is open."

"Maybe he jumped out," said Ted. "He could climb up on the woodpile and jump out the window. Do you think he'll come back, Mother?"

Mrs. Martin looked at her two Curlytops.

"Are you sure your dog Skyrocket isn't in the shed?" she asked.

"No, he isn't there," answered Ted.

"We looked all over, and I felt in his bed," added Janet. "The soft carpet Ted put in

for Skyrocket is there, but our dog is gone. Oh dear!" and she was almost crying.

"I'd better take a look to make sure," said Mrs. Martin. "We'll bring a lamp with us. He may be hiding in some dark corner," she added as she lighted a lamp.

"And, if he isn't there, can we go out and look for him?" asked Ted.

"We'll see," answered his mother. "Maybe he'll come back himself, if he really is gone."

"Oh, he's gone," declared Ted, sadly enough.

Out to the woodshed the two Curlytops followed their mother, who carried the lamp. And while they are looking for the lost Skyrocket it will be a good chance for me to let my new readers know something of the Martin children, as told in the previous books of this series.

As I have told you, Theodore and Janet were called the "Curlytops" as often as anything else, and the reason for this was because they had such curly hair. Ted's whole name was Theodore Baradale Martin, and Jan's was Janet, while "Trouble's" right name was William Anthony Martin.

Mr. Martin kept a store in Cresco, a town

not a great way from New York, and he also owned property in other places. Cresco was a pretty village, and Ted and Jan thought it one of the nicest places in the world. Other nice places were Grandpa Martin's farm at Elmburg near Clover Lake, Aunt Jo's summer cottage at Mt. Hope on Ruby Lake and Uncle Frank's ranch at Rockville, in the state of Montana.

The first book that tells about Janet, Ted, and their friends, is named "The Curlytops at Cherry Farm," and in that I told you what fun they had at Grandpa Martin's home, and how they helped sell cherries to the Lollypop Man.

In the next book, "The Curlytops on Star Island," you may read of the fun the children had when they went camping.

In the third book there is a story of "The Curlytops Snowed In." Many things happened to Jan, Ted and Trouble when the big snow storm came, and they thought they never had had so much fun in all their lives.

But that was before they went out West, and in the fourth book you have the story of "The Curlytops at Uncle Frank's Ranch." There the little folks rode ponyback and had a grand time.

They came back to Cresco after many adventures, and now it was summer again, and there was no school, for it was the long vacation. Ted and Janet wondered where they would spend it, for nearly always they went with their father and mother to some lake, or else up in the mountains, or perhaps to the seashore during the hot weather of July and August.

I have told you, in this book, how the Curlytops were playing the button game, and how, just before they went to bed, they went out to the woodshed to see if their dog Skyrocket was all right. Besides the dog, they had a cat named "Turnover," who used to roll over in a sideways somersault when told to. The Curlytops had once had a goat named Nicknack, but the goat had been sold a few weeks before, so that now they had only the cat and the dog.

"But we haven't got any dog if we can't find Skyrocket," said Ted, as he and Janet went out with their mother to the shed.

"Oh, we'll find him all right," said Mrs. Martin. "Perhaps he heard Turnover crying, and he jumped out of the window to see what the matter was with her. Skyrocket takes good care of Turnover, you know."

"But Turnover is asleep in the sitting room," said Ted. "She didn't cry, so Skyrocket didn't jump out to help her. And he never jumped out the window before."

"No, that's so," agreed Mrs. Martin. "But we'll find him, I think, though it is strange he isn't in the shed where he always sleeps at night. But wait until I look."

She held the light high and low, all around the shed, but there was no sign of the pet dog. She called, and so did Ted and Janet, but Skyrocket did not answer with a whine, a bark or by a thump of his tail.

"Was this window closed when you put Skyrocket in here after supper?" asked Mrs. Martin of Teddy.

"Yes, I closed it," answered the curly-headed boy. "I always shut it 'ceptin' on hot nights, and it wasn't so very hot to-night."

"Well, if the window was closed, Skyrocket didn't open it, that's sure," said Mrs. Martin. "He's a smart dog, and he can do many tricks, but he can't open the shed window."

"Do you think he got out that way, Mother?" asked Jan.

"It looks so," was the answer.

"Did somebody open the window and take Skyrocket out?" Ted wanted to know.

"They might have taken him out, or whistled for him to jump out to them," said Mrs. Martin. "I'm sure I don't see how else it could have happened. Skyrocket could jump up on the pile of wood, and from there jump out of the window, as long as it was open. Are you sure it was closed, Teddy boy?"

"Sure," was the answer. "I 'member thinking was it hot enough to leave it open, and then I said it wasn't. And I made the new piece of carpet all smooth, and Skyrocket curled up on it, and I told him good-night. And then, when Janet and I came out to look and see if he was all right—why—he wasn't here!" and Teddy, seven-year-old boy though he was, acted as if he might be going to cry.

"Well, perhaps he just jumped out of the window to have a little fun after dark, though he never did it before," said Mrs. Martin. "We'll take a look around the house and call him."

As they came out of the shed they heard a voice calling them. The voice said:

"Hello! Where's everybody?"

"It's daddy!" exclaimed Ted.

"Oh, Skyrocket is lost!" added Jan, as she ran to meet her father, who stood in the back kitchen door.

"Skyrocket lost? No!" exclaimed Mr. Martin, in surprise. "Did he run away?"

"It looks so," said Mrs. Martin. "Come out here and we'll tell you all about it."

This Janet and Teddy did, taking turns, with Mrs. Martin putting in a word now and then.

"You say you shut Skyrocket up in the shed, and left the window closed?" said Mr. Martin, to Ted.

"Yes, Daddy. And when Jan and I came out he was gone."

"And he isn't here now," added Mrs. Martin. "We were just going to look around outside, and whistle and call, when we heard your voice. You're late, Daddy Martin!"

"Yes, I stayed to write some letters at the store," answered the merchant. "I have been arranging about the place where we shall go to spend the summer vacation. I think it's going to be at——"

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Martin, raising her hand to stop her husband from speaking.

"What is it?" asked Ted, while Janet looked eagerly at her father. She wanted to hear him say where it was they were going that summer.

"I thought I heard a noise back by the little barn where we used to keep Nicknack, the goat," said Mrs. Martin. "Perhaps it was Skyrocket!"

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed Teddy and Jan, and, without waiting another moment, they hurried out, running down the path toward the little goat stable.

It was quite dark outside by this time, and Ted and Janet, hurrying from the woodshed where Mrs. Martin had a light, could not see very well. You know how it is when you go into a dark moving picture place from the bright outdoors—you can't see very well, at first.

Well, this happened to Ted and Jan, and the first Mr. and Mrs. Martin heard, after the Curlytops ran out, was a cry from one of them.

"Did you find Skyrocket?" asked Mr. Martin, hurrying out of the shed.

"No, but Teddy fell down," said Jan.

"Did you hurt yourself, Teddy boy?" asked his father.

"N—no—I—I guess not," answered Teddy slowly. "I stumbled over that pile of grass Patrick cut to-day. I fell on that—it was nice and soft."

"Well, it's a good thing to pick out something soft to fall on when you stumble," said Mr. Martin. "Now be careful, both of you. Better wait for us. Mother, come and bring the lamp. Maybe Skyrocket is shut up in the goat stable and can't get out."

But the little stable, empty since Nicknack had been sold, held no little dog, either. Skyrocket was not there. And now they began a search all around the house, whistling and calling for the pet of the Curlytops.

But Skyrocket did not answer; he did not whine, he did not bark, and there was no joyful thump of his tail.

"Where can he be?" asked Teddy.

"Where can he be?" echoed Janet.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin looked at each other in the light of the lamp. Then Mr. Martin spoke.

"I think Skyrocket will be back by morning," he said. "Sometimes dogs run away, just for the fun of it, but they usually come back."

"Skyrocket never ran away very far be-

fore," said Teddy. "And he always came back when I whistled."

"Perhaps he has gone so far he can't hear you this time," said his mother. "Come, we'll go into the house. It's getting late, and you children must go to bed."

"But we want Skyrocket!" cried Janet.

"I know, my dear. But we can't find him, and there is no use hunting in the dark. We'll leave the shed door open, and if he comes back, as I'm sure he will, he can go in to his new carpet bed. In the morning when you wake up, he'll be ready to play with you."

There was nothing else to do, and so Teddy and Janet went into the house, after one last, lingering look at the shed where Skyrocket slept at night.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janet. "Nothing will ever be any fun if Skyrocket is gone!"

"Oh, but he isn't gone, I'm sure!" said Mr. Martin, in as jolly a voice as he could speak. "I think he'll be here in the morning, though it certainly is queer about the window being open. But now trot off to bed. Curlytops! It's long past your time!"

"Don't feel so bad," said Mrs. Martin. "I don't believe Skyrocket is lost. Haven't you

something pleasant to tell them, Daddy? What was that you started to say about our summer vacation?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mr. Martin. "I have picked out a place for us to go. It's a new place. I have bought some property there, and I expect to spend part of the summer there looking after it."

"Oh, where is it?" asked Ted, and already he and Janet were feeling not quite so sad over the lost dog—they had something new to wonder over.

"The place where we shall spend the summer vacation is at Silver Lake," said Mr. Martin. "It isn't very far from here. We can go by train or in an auto."

"And live in a tent?" asked Ted.

"No, I think we'll have a bungalow," answered his father. "But there! I'm not going to tell you any more about it until morning. Off to bed with you, and dream about Silver Lake!"

He kissed the Curlytops good-night, as did Mrs. Martin, and then Jan and Ted went upstairs. They were smiling now, and, for the time, had forgotten about Skyrocket, though, of course, they wanted him to come back.

"Do you think their dog is really gone?"

asked Mrs. Martin of her husband, as they sat down to talk about spending the summer at Silver Lake.

"I'm afraid so," answered Mr. Martin. "He never ran away before, and the window being open makes it look as though some one had taken him. Skyrocket is a valuable dog, and could be taught to do tricks for a show or circus."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Martin. "Ted and Janet will feel very bad at losing him."

Early the next morning the Curlytops ran down to the woodshed. They peered in through the door, which was still open, and looked in the box where Ted had so carefully put the new piece of soft carpet to make a bed.

"He—he isn't there," whispered the boy softly.

"Skyrocket didn't come back!" said Janet, and there were tears in her eyes.

Slowly and sadly the Curlytops walked out of the shed, and just as they turned to go into the house they saw Mrs. Ransom hurrying toward them. Mrs. Ransom was a woman who kept a small store not far from the Martin house, where she sold drygoods, toys and candies.

"Oh, Ted! Jan!" exclaimed Mrs. Ransom, when she saw the two children, "where's your father?"

"He's in the house eating breakfast," answered Jan, for she and Ted had seen him at the table when they hurried downstairs to look to see if Skyrocket had come back.

"Well, tell him to come out here, please," said Mrs. Ransom.

"Did you find Skyrocket?" asked Ted eagerly.

"Skyrocket? No. I hadn't heard that he was lost," answered Mrs. Ransom. "But there's a man acting very oddly in your front yard, and I thought your father ought to know about it. I saw the queer man from my store window, and I hurried over to tell you about him. Go in and have your father come out. He ought to do something about the funny man!"

CHAPTER III

PUSHING AND PULLING

For a moment or two Jan and Ted stood looking at Mrs. Ransom. They knew her very well, for she had kept her little store near their house as long as they could remember. They often went there to buy candy or small toys.

"What's the funny man doing?" asked Jan, forgetting, for a little while, her sorrow over the loss of Skyrocket.

"Is he funny like a clown in a circus, and is he turning somersaults?" Ted wanted to know.

"Gracious goodness, no, child! Why should he do that?" asked Mrs. Ransom. "When I said he was funny, I meant he was acting in a queer way. He walked toward your house, fell down, got up again, and fell down once more. You'd better go and tell your father."

"We will!" exclaimed Ted, starting for the house, followed by his sister.

"I'd go in and tell him myself," said Mrs. Ransom, "but I must get back to my store. I left it all alone to run over and tell him about the queer man. When I saw you two Curlytops I thought I'd tell you. Hurry in, now!"

"Oh, maybe he knows something about Skyrocket!" cried Jan, with new and sudden hope.

"Huh! How could he know Skyrocket?" asked Ted. "Come on, we'll go and see what he's like."

"Oh, aren't you going to tell daddy first?" asked the little girl, as she watched Mrs. Ransom hurry across a short-cut path through the garden, and so back to her store.

"Let's look at the man first, and see what he does funny," suggested Teddy. "Maybe he's a clown, anyhow, and maybe Mrs. Ransom never saw one that wasn't in a circus. Come on!"

Janet hung back for a second or two, and then followed Ted around the corner of the house.

There, just as the storekeeper woman had said, was a strange man lying on the lawn of

the Curlytops' home. He was not doing anything funny just then. Instead, he seemed very still and quiet.

"He isn't a bit funny!" declared Janet.

"No, I don't think he is," said Teddy. "Maybe he got tired of being funny. I'll go in and tell daddy."

It did not take Mr. Martin long to hurry out to the front of the house after Ted and Jan had come in with the strange story of the "funny man." And Mr. Martin had no sooner bent over the man and rolled him to one side, to get a better look at his face, than he cried:

"Why, this poor man is sick! He needs a doctor! Ted, run in and tell mother to telephone for Dr. Whitney. Have her ask him to come right over here. Jan, you skip back to the tool house and see if Patrick is there. If he is, tell him I want him."

"Yes, Daddy!" exclaimed Janet.

"Yes, Daddy!" echoed Ted, and together they hurried off, one into the house, the other to get Patrick, the kindly old Irishman who cut the grass, made the garden, and did other work about the Martin home.

Janet found Patrick sharpening the lawnmower, ready for a day's work. Laying that

aside, he hurried to the front of the house, where Mr. Martin was bending over the stranger.

"Is he a tramp?" asked Patrick.

"No, indeed," answered Mr. Martin. "He seems to be a poor man, but he is clean, and few tramps are that. And though some of his clothes are ragged, they are clean, too. Help me carry him into the house, Patrick. I've sent for Dr. Whitney."

And when Dr. Whitney came he said that the man, who had not opened his eyes since he was carried in, was quite ill.

"But I think that if he has a good rest, a little medicine, and plenty to eat he will soon be better," said the doctor. "Are you going to keep him here, Mr. Martin, or shall I have him sent to the hospital?"

"Oh, keep him here, Daddy!" cried Teddy. "He looks like a good man, and maybe he knows where our Skyrocket is."

"No, I hardly think that," answered Mr. Martin. "But I believe I will let him stay here, Dr. Whitney. My wife says she and Nora will look after him, and he will be better off than in the hospital, as long as he is not very ill."

"He is sick mostly because he hasn't had

enough to eat," said the doctor. "Feed him well, and he'll soon be all right."

The doctor went away, after leaving some medicine for the stranger. And stranger he was, since nobody at the Martin house knew him, and Mrs. Ransom, who came over again, after she had found some one to stay in her store for a little while, said she had never seen him around Cresco before.

"And I know 'most everybody in Cresco," she added, as indeed she did, since many of the fathers and mothers, as well as the boys and girls, bought a good many things in her little shop.

As for the "funny man" himself, he could not tell who he was, for he seemed to be asleep from the time Mr. Martin and Patrick carried him in and put him to bed in a spare room. The man was not really asleep, as Jan and Ted learned later. It was his illness that made him keep his eyes closed, and would not let him talk or hear things that were said.

"Now you children run out to play," said Mrs. Martin to Ted and Janet, after Dr. Whitney had left. "Take Trouble with you, and look after him. Nora and I are going to be busy with—well, with him," and she

nodded toward the room where the strange man lay so quietly.

"What's his name?" asked Ted.

"I don't know, my dear," answered his mother. "When he wakes up he may tell us. Run out and play now."

"We'll go and see if we can't find Skyrocket," said Janet.

"Oh, yes! We've got to find him!" added Ted.

The children had hurried through their breakfast, and now with Baby William, or Trouble, in their care, they started to search around the yard for the missing Skyrocket.

There were several buildings on the Martin place. There was the garage, where Daddy Martin kept his automobile, there was the tool house, where Patrick kept the lawn mower, the hose he used for sprinkling the lawn, and such things. There was a hen house and the stable where Nicknack the goat used to live. Then, of course, there was the woodshed, which was the home of Skyrocket. But alas! Skyrocket was not in it now.

"Let's look there just once more!" said Janet, as she and her two brothers walked

down the back steps toward the woodshed. "Maybe he came back."

But no Skyrocket was to be seen. There was a bone he had been gnawing the night before, and there was the nice, soft carpet Teddy had given him for a bed. But the pet dog was gone.

"Let's look out in Nicknack's stable again," went on Janet.

So they did, and in other places, but no Skyrocket was to be found.

"I guess we'll have to put a piece in the paper about him," went on Jan, as she and the two boys sat down to rest after running about the yard, looking in all sorts of places.

"A piece in the paper—what do you mean?" asked Ted.

"I mean a—a tizerment," declared Janet. "You know—a piece like the one Mrs. Ransom put in when she lost her pocketbook. She got it back, too. Somebody found it and brought it back. Maybe somebody has found our Skyrocket, and they'd give him back if they knew we wanted him. Let's get daddy to put a piece in the paper."

"Yes, we could do that," agreed Ted, after thinking the matter over. "We'll tell him when he comes home to dinner. But now

let's look out in the auto stable again, Jan. We didn't look there very good. Maybe Skyrocket is hiding in there."

"Me want wide in auto!" decided Trouble, as his brother and sister led him down the path once more.

"No, dear! Daddy has the auto down at his store," explained Janet. "Trouble can't ride now."

"Oh!" said the little fellow. "Wide to-mollow?" he asked.

"Yes, maybe you can have a ride to-morrow," said Ted. "And say, Jan!" he cried, "what about Silver Lake? We almost forgot! Maybe we'll go there to-morrow!"

"Oh, maybe we shall!" cried Janet, with shining, eager eyes.

"Me go, too?" asked Trouble.

"Oh, yes, you'll have to come, too!" sighed Janet. "I do hope you don't fall in too much!" she said.

"Come on!" called Teddy to her. "Let's go and look in the garage again. We didn't look there very good."

The garage had once been a stable, but no horse was kept in it now, since Mr. Martin had an automobile. There was, however, an old carriage, and several other things, such

as a wheelbarrow, old boards, shutters, broken doors and the like, that Patrick had stored away.

"There's lots of places for Skyrocket to hide!" said Ted, as he and Janet entered the garage. "Here, Sky! Sky!" he called, and he whistled for the pet dog, giving him the pet name of "Sky."

But there was no answer. Skyrocket must have been far away, his little owners knew, not to answer their call. Ted and Janet forgot Baby William for a few moments while they searched all about the garage for their pet dog.

"I guess he isn't here," said Janet, with a sigh, after a while.

"No," agreed Teddy. "We'll have to put a piece in the paper. Maybe he——"

Teddy suddenly stopped speaking, for both he and Janet heard a funny little squeal.

"There he is!" cried Ted.

"That's Skyrocket!" added Jan, clapping her hands. "He's caught fast somewhere and can't get out."

They both stood still, listening for the cry to sound once more. It did, but in a different way. For besides the squeal came a call of:

"Ted! Jan! Oh! Oh! I tan't det out! I caught fast! Oh, tum an' det me!"

"It's Trouble!" shouted Janet.

"Where is he?" cried Ted.

They looked around. They had let go of the hands of their little brother while searching in the back part of the garage among the odds and ends for Skyrocket. They had forgotten about Baby William for a time, and now they could not see where he was.

"Where are you, Trouble? Where are you?" cried Ted.

"I—I'se stuck!" was the answer.

"Yes, dear! But where are you?" asked Janet.

"In de horsie wagon!"

"Oh, he's playing in the old carriage!" exclaimed Ted, for Trouble always called that the "horsie wagon."

It did not take Jan and her older brother long to reach the place where Trouble was. But instead of seeing him upon the seat of the battered old carriage, where he sometimes climbed to play he was driving a horse, they saw him caught in between the spokes of one of the wheels.

"Oh, Trouble!" cried Janet.

"Oh, Trouble!" shouted Teddy.

And well might they say this, for Trouble was indeed in trouble. His head was stuck between two spokes, and he could not get it out either way.

"Come on!" he cried to his brother and sister. "Help me det out!"

"Of course we'll help you, dear!" said Janet. "But how did you get caught that way?"

"I was playin' peek-a-boo wif a chicken."

"Peek-a-boo with a chicken?" echoed Ted.

"Yeppie! De chicken, he comed in de auto house, an' he looked at me froo de horsie-wagon wheel, an' I looked at him, an' I did stick my head froo de spokes, I did, an' I did holler 'peek-a-boo!' an' den I touldn't det out!"

"Well, I should say you couldn't!" cried Janet. "Take hold of him, Teddy, and push him out."

"We can't push him out, we've got to pull him!" decided Teddy; after looking at the way his baby brother was caught.

"No, he's got to be pushed!" insisted Janet.

"Pulled!" cried Teddy.

"Oh, det me out! Det me out!" wailed Trouble.

Janet took hold of his legs, and Teddy took hold of his head. But as Janet pushed and Teddy pushed also, instead of pulling, which he had said was the right way, poor Baby William stayed just where he was, with his head caught between two carriage spokes.

"Oh, dear, we'll never get him out!" said Janet. "What'll we do, Ted?"

"We've got to try again," decided Ted. "We'll both push, and then we'll both pull."

"All right," agreed Janet.

Whether it was that Ted and Jan pushed or pulled at the wrong time, or whether it was that they were so excited they didn't know what they were doing, I can't say, but Trouble was still held fast, and with tears in his eyes he looked up from his queer position and cried:

"Det me out! Det me out!"

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEER BOX

TROUBLE was now crying and kicking with his little heels against the floor of the garage. Part of his little body was half-way under the carriage, the front wheels of which were turned in such a way that Janet could reach her little brother's legs. His head stuck out through one of the front wheels, in between two spokes.

"We've got to get him out!" decided Janet, as she and Ted paused to get their breath.

"Yes," replied Teddy. "Let's both pull hard!"

They were about to take hold of Baby William once more, but he screamed so loudly that they held back.

"You hurted me!" he wailed. "You hurted me! Don't push me an' pull me any more!"

"But we've got to get you out, Trouble!" said Teddy. "We have to push you or pull you!"

"Which hurts the most, Trouble?" asked Jan kindly. "Does it hurt most to pull you or to push you?"

"Dey boff hurts!" sobbed the little boy. "You go and tell my mommer I wants her to get me out! I wants my mommer!"

"I guess we'd better do that!" decided Teddy. "You go for mother, Jan. I'll stay with Trouble."

Off toward the house hurried the little girl. She burst into the kitchen, where Mrs. Martin was making some broth for the sick man who had fallen down through weakness and hunger on the Martin lawn that morning.

"Oh, Mother, he's stuck fast!" cried Janet.

"Who, Skyrocket? Did you find him?" asked Mrs. Martin, thinking of course it was the dog about which her little daughter was talking.

"No, Skyrocket isn't stuck fast. We didn't find him," replied Janet. "It's Trouble! He's stuck fast! And Teddy pulled and I pulled, and then we both

pushed, but we can't get him loose. He's stuck!"

"Oh, dear me!" sighed Mrs. Martin. "What will happen next? Here, Nora, watch this broth so it doesn't burn. Now, Jan, come and show me where Trouble is stuck fast."

Taking hold of Janet's hand, Mrs. Martin hurried out to the garage. Rushing in, she saw Teddy holding Trouble's head, which was still thrust between two of the carriage wheel spokes.

"Is he badly hurt?" asked Mrs. Martin, thinking perhaps Baby William was in worse trouble than Janet had told her.

"Oh, no, he isn't hurt," explained Ted. "He just can't get his head out, that's all. I'm holding it up for him, 'cause he says the wheel spokes hurt his neck."

"Poor little darling! I should think they would!" said his mother.

"I—I was playin' peek-a-boo wif a chicken," explained Baby William. "An' I stuck in my head, but I can't stick it out! Oh, Muzzie!" he cried, using a pet name for his mother that he had almost forgotten, "you det me out!"

"Of course I will!" exclaimed Mrs. Mar-

tin. "Here, Ted, let me get hold of him."

"You can't push him out!" declared Ted.

"And you can't pull him out," added Janet. "His head is too big!"

Mrs. Martin gave one look at the wheel spokes, she saw just how Trouble's head was caught, and then, with a quick motion, she lifted him up, pulled him back, and in another moment he was safe in her arms and sobbing on her shoulder.

"Why—why!" exclaimed Teddy, "how'd you do it so quick, Mother?"

"We tried and tried, an' we couldn't do it," added Jan. "We pushed and we pulled; didn't we, Ted?"

"Yes!"

"Well, you should have lifted up," said Mrs. Martin with a smile.

"We never thought of that," Teddy said.

"You see the carriage wheel spokes are put together like the letter 'V,'" said Mrs. Martin, as she showed the two older children. "When Trouble's head and neck were toward the bottom of the V they were in so tightly that neither pushing nor pulling would get him out. But when I lifted him up I raised him toward the wide part of the V, at the place where he had stuck

his head in, and then it was easy enough to get him out. But you mustn't do it again, Baby William!" she added, as she patted the sobbing little fellow on his shoulders.

"No, me don't want to play peek-a-boo wif a chicken any more at all!" decided Trouble.

"Haven't you found your dog yet?" their mother asked.

Ted and Jan sadly shook their heads.

"Well, maybe he'll come home," said Mrs. Martin kindly. "He may be off paying a visit to some doggie friends of his. Look around some more, and take good care of Trouble."

Baby William felt better now, especially after Nora had brought out to him, and also to Janet and Teddy, some sugar cookies. Munching these, the children wandered around, looking here, there, everywhere for the lost Skyrocket.

Mrs. Martin went back to the kitchen to finish making the broth for the sick man.

"I wish he would wake up," said Teddy, as he and his sister, each holding a hand of Baby William, walked about searching for the pet dog. They had looked in the room of the sick man.

"What do you want him to wake up for? To tell us a story?" asked Janet.

"Oh, maybe he can tell stories!" exclaimed Ted. "I didn't think of that. But I want to ask him if he saw Skyrocket. He's a tramp, and tramps see lots of dogs when they walk around."

"He is not a tramp!" declared Jan. "I heard daddy say he wasn't a tramp, even if he was poor."

"Well, he'd been walkin' a lot!" exclaimed Ted. "I looked at his shoes when daddy and Patrick carried him into the house, and his shoes had a lot of holes in 'em. Shoes get holes in 'em when you walk a lot, and if you walk a lot you're a tramp, even if you have good clothes. So maybe he did see Skyrocket."

"Well, maybe he did," agreed Janet, thinking that, as Teddy was older than she, he must know more about it.

"'Et's go in an' p'ay buttons!" suddenly proposed Trouble, as he thought of the fun he had had the night before. "I want all de wed buttons!"

"No, dear, we aren't going to play the button game now," said Janet. "We must look for Skyrocket."

"Trouble want to play buttons!" exclaimed the little fellow. "If no play, Trouble sit down in de mud!" and he pulled his hands away from both Ted and Janet and started toward a little mud puddle at one side of the garden path.

Jan looked at Ted, not knowing what to do.

"No play button game, Trouble sit in de mud!" cried the little fellow, and, tiny "tyke" that he was, he stuck the toe of one shoe in the puddle.

"Yes, Jan will play the button game!" cried his sister. "Don't sit in the mud!" She ran over and caught Trouble by the hand again. "I'll take him up to the house and get out the button bag," said Jan to Ted. "You can keep on looking for Skyrocket. Mother won't like it if Trouble gets all muddy, and he will sit down in it if I don't keep hold of him."

"All right," agreed Ted. "You can play with him. I'll go and see if I can find Skyrocket. But if that man wakes up you come and tell me. I want to ask him if he saw our dog."

A little later, when Janet had taken Trouble back to the house, and while Ted

was walking down in the peach orchard, whistling and calling to Skyrocket, the boy heard an answering signal.

"Hello!" called Ted. "Who's there?"

"It's me," was the answer, which, if not just the right way to answer, told Teddy what he wanted to know.

"Oh, hello, Tom!" he called, as Tom Taylor, a boy chum who lived in the next street, came walking along the orchard path. "What are you doin'?"

"Nothin'!" answered Tom. "What you doin', Ted?"

"Looking for our dog," said Teddy, beginning to remember that his mother had told him to be careful not to drop the last letter "G" from his words that needed it. "Skyrocket is lost."

"Skyrocket lost?" cried Tom Taylor. "How'd it happen?"

Teddy told the simple little story, and also how he and Janet had been looking for their missing pet, and how Trouble had been caught in the carriage wheel.

"I'll help you look," offered Tom. "Skyrocket is a nice dog. Maybe some tramp opened the woodshed window and coaxed him out," he added.

"There's a tramp up at our house now," said Ted, rather proud to be able to tell such news as that.

"A tramp! There is?" cried Tom. "Did he take Skyrocket?"

"Well, he isn't zactly a tramp," went on Ted, and then he explained about the man his father and Patrick had carried in. "When he gets woke up I'm going to ask him about Skyrocket, though."

"I guess you'd better," agreed Tom. "Now come on, I'll help you look."

But, though the two little boys wandered here and there, calling and whistling, there was no sign of Skyrocket.

"I guess we'll have to put a piece in the paper about him," decided Ted, as he sat down to rest on the bank of a little pond in the shade of a willow tree.

"I hope you'll find him," said Tom, again. "Say, I know what we can do while we're resting," he went on.

"What?"

"We can make a raft and go riding in the pond," answered Tom. "It's got lots of water in now, after the rain. We can make a raft from the fence boards and have a dandy sail."

Ted thought about it for a moment, and then said:

"That's what we'll do! We can take off our shoes and stockings, 'cause a raft isn't like a boat. The water sloshes all up on it. We'll go barefoot, and we'll have a lot of fun."

The pond where the boys had sat down to rest in the shade was not usually deep enough to float a raft, or any boat except tiny toy ones. But since the rain two days before had made the pond larger and deeper, and also muddier, there was, as Tom had said, water enough to let a small raft of boards be paddled around in it.

This raft Ted and Tom now started to make. There were plenty of loose fence boards near the pond, and some of the boards had nails in them. Using stones for hammers, the two boys knocked out some of the rusty nails, and drove them in again, fastening a number of boards together. Then they put the raft in the water. It floated, but when Tom and Ted stood on it, the raft sank out of sight under the muddy surface.

"But it doesn't touch bottom!" cried Ted, as he pushed it about with a willow pole. "It floats, and we don't care if we get our

feet wet, 'cause we've got our shoes and stockings off."

"Hi! We'll have lots of fun!" cried Tom.

And the boys did. They pushed the raft to and fro, from one side of the little meadow pond to the other. They pretended they were making long voyages, and half the time Ted was captain of the "ship," and the other half it was Tom's turn.

The boys were having a very jolly time, thinking nothing of splashing each other with the muddy water as they poled the raft about, when suddenly Ted gave too hard a thrust on his pole. It broke in two pieces and the next second he found himself splashing about in the muddy water. He had fallen off the raft!

"Oh! Wug! Guggle! Blug!" spluttered Ted, his mouth full of muddy water.

"Wait! Sit still! I'll get you out!" cried Tom.

But Ted did not wait. The water was not deep—hardly up to his knees, and, after splashing and floundering about, he managed to stand up on his feet. He did not "sit still" as Tom had told him to.

Oh, but he was a sight—all muddy, and dripping water all over!

"Are—are you hurt?" asked Tom.

"N—n-no!" stammered Ted, in answer. "You don't need to jump in to get me out. I—I can wade out."

"Get on the raft and I'll pole you to shore," offered Tom.

"Yes, I can do that," Ted answered. "There might be glass on the bottom and I'd cut my feet. I'll get on."

He managed to get aboard the raft again, though he nearly tipped Tom off in doing so. Then the two boys poled their craft to shore.

"Say, you are wet!" exclaimed Tom, as he looked at his chum. "Awful wet! Will your mother be mad?"

"I guess she won't like it," Ted confessed. "But if I stay out long enough maybe I'll dry. I guess we won't sail any more."

"No," agreed Tom, "I guess we better not. I'll walk around with you till you get dry."

It was a warm, sunny day, and Ted felt sure he would not take cold from his ducking. He knew, too, that the sun and wind would soon dry his clothes, though of course the mud would still remain.

So he and Tom walked about in the lower

peach orchard, and around in the meadow where the pond was, on which they had sailed the raft. Ted was about half dry, and the two boys were throwing stones in the water, seeing who could make the biggest splash, when they saw Mrs. Ransom, owner of the little store, hurrying along the meadow path.

"Hello, boys!" she called pleasantly to Ted and Tom. She knew them well, for they spent many pennies over her counter.

"Hello, Miss Ransom!" answered the two boys.

"Land sakes! what are you all wet and muddy for, Teddy Martin?" asked the storekeeper, when she saw the state Teddy was in. "It hasn't been raining, has it?"

"No'm," answered Ted. "I fell off the raft."

"Raft? What raft?" asked Mrs. Ransom. "I didn't know there was a raft around here."

"Ted and I made one," explained Tom, "an' his pole broke and he fell in. He's walkin' around to dry himself off."

"Land sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Ransom. "Your mother won't like that, Teddy Martin. But I mustn't stand here talking.

I'm going over to Constable Juke's house. Have you see him this morning?"

"Constable Juke!" exclaimed Teddy and Tom in one breath.

"Yes, I want him to arrest somebody," went on Mrs. Ransom.

The two boys looked at each other. A constable in the country, they knew, was the same as a policeman in the city. He could arrest people if they were bad.

"You—you want Constable Juke?" asked Ted, in a low voice.

"To arrest somebody?" asked Tom, almost whispering.

"Yes, that's what I want him to do if he can catch 'em!"

"Is it—do you want him to arrest *us,* 'cause I fell in the water, Miss Ransom?" asked Teddy, and his voice trembled.

"Land sakes, no, child!" laughed the storekeeper lady. "What ever put such a notion in your head? What I want of Constable Juke is to have him arrest somebody that robbed my store."

"Robbed your store!" cried Ted and Tom. This was getting more and more exciting.

"Yes," went on Mrs. Ransom, whom the boys were apt to call "Miss," though she

had been married and was a widow. "Some one got into my place last night and took a lot of things. I didn't miss 'em until just now. And as soon as I did I started for the constable. I'm on my way there now. I hope to find him at home."

"Did they take any money?" asked Ted.

"Yes, a little. But they took some other things, too. I don't mind the money so much, nor the other things. But they took a queer box my brother, that used to be a sailor, brought me from a far-off country. It was a very queer box, and I wouldn't sell it for a lot of money. Now the burglars have it, and I'm going to have them arrested if Constable Juke can find 'em! Land sakes, but I must hurry on! Stay out in the sun, Teddy, until you get dry, and then most of that mud will brush off. Dear me! To think that queer box should be taken after all these years that I've kept it! I hope I can get it back!"

CHAPTER V

UNCLE BEN

Mrs. Ransom hurried along the meadow path on her way to the house of Constable Juke. The constable was not like a regular policeman. He did not wear a blue uniform with brass buttons, and he did not walk up and down the street swinging a club. He was just a farmer, and when he was called on to arrest anybody, as he was once in a while in Cresco, he just went out in his regular working clothes and took the person to the jail.

"Say!" exclaimed Tom, as he watched Mrs. Ransom hurrying away, "I'd better go home, I guess, Ted, and so had you."

"What for?" asked Ted. "Let's go and see Constable Juke arrest the burglars that robbed Miss Ransom's store."

"Nope! I'm going home!" declared Tom.

"But what for?" asked Ted again.

"'Cause," explained his playmate, "if burglars robbed Miss Ransom's store maybe they robbed our house, and maybe my mother would want me to help catch 'em—or, anyhow, go after the constable for her. And maybe they robbed your house, too, Teddy. You'd better go home."

Ted looked down at his clothes, which were only partly dry and which still had much mud on them.

"No, I don't b'lieve I'll go home yet," he said. "I'll stay out in the sun till I get dryer. Anyhow, our house wasn't robbed. I was there all night, and no burglars came in. We have a tramp at our house," he added. "You know—the one I told you about."

Tom thought for a moment.

"Say!" he cried, "maybe he's the man that took the things from Miss Ransom's store. Tramps rob places, don't they?"

"Maybe," agreed Ted. "But I don't believe this tramp did. He's a nice looking man. Anyhow, Miss Ransom saw him on our lawn, and he wasn't in her store. I guess it was somebody else."

"I guess it was, too," agreed Tom. "Anyhow, I'm going home to see if we had any

robbers. If we had, I'll tell you about it, and then we can go off in the woods and hunt for 'em!"

Both boys looked across the meadow to the house of Constable Juke. They could see, even from where they stood, Mrs. Ransom going into the yard, and after they had watched a little longer, they saw a man come out and speak to the woman who kept the candy and notion store.

"That's Constable Juke now," said Tom.

"And she's telling him all about the robbers," added Ted.

"I'm going to hurry home," went on Tom. "And if there've been any robbers at our house I'll go and tell the constable, too."

"No, don't do that!" cried Ted.

"Why not?" asked his chum.

"'Cause we want to catch 'em ourselves. If you find out your house has been robbed, you come and tell me and we'll hunt the burglars. We won't say anything about it to Constable Juke till we catch the burglars."

"Say, that'll be fun!" cried Tom, his eyes opening wide. "Won't everybody be s'prised?"

"They surely will," cried Ted. "You

hurry back now, and then come an' tell me."

Tom ran off across the meadow, and Ted walked slowly up and down in the sun, waiting for the mud to dry, so it could be brushed off. But, after a while, he grew tired of this.

"I guess it doesn't show much now," he said to himself as he tried to turn around to look at his back. "Anyhow, I'm going to tell mother I fell in. Besides, she can see I did. I might as well go home now and see if we had any burglars. I don't see how we could, but maybe we did," he added, half wishing this would be so. "Then Tom and I could catch 'em all together."

So, not waiting for Tom to come back, Ted hurried home. Out in front of the house he saw an automobile, which he knew was not his father's.

"Oh, maybe there's a policeman in there now about the burglars!" thought the little boy. But, as he entered the house, he heard the voice of Dr. Whitney. It was the doctor's automobile out in front.

"Yes, I think he will do very nicely now," Ted heard the doctor saying.

The doctor and Ted's mother came out of the room where the sick man had been put to bed.

"Hello there, Curlytop!" cried Dr. Whitney to Ted, as he ruffled up the tangled curls of the little fellow. "Well, where have you been, in swimming?" the doctor asked with a laugh, as he noticed the mud on the boy and the wet clothes.

"I—I wasn't swimming," said Teddy. "I fell in—off the raft."

"Dear me, Theodore Martin!" cried his mother. "What do you mean? What raft?"

Of course Teddy had to tell all about it then, but he hurried over the accident in the water as fast as he could, for he had other news.

"What do you think?" he exclaimed, before his mother could say anything about his having fallen off the raft. "Miss Ransom's store was robbed and she's gone after Constable Juke, and maybe Tom Taylor's house is robbed, too, and the burglars took a queer box from Miss Ransom that her brother brought from away off and Tom and me—I mean Tom and I are going to——"

Teddy stopped just then. There were a number of reasons for this. One was that he was out of breath, from having talked so fast.

Another was that he thought, just in time, that he had better not say he and Tom were going to try to find the burglars—for that is what Ted had on the tip of his tongue to say next. Another reason for stopping so quickly was that his mother held up her hand, just as a policeman at a busy street crossing holds up his hand to stop the automobiles. Whenever Mrs. Martin did that, Teddy knew he must calm down. And he did this time.

"Theodore Baradale Martin!" said his mother slowly, "what does all this talk mean about burglars?"

"It's true, Mother!" exclaimed Teddy. "Miss Ransom's store was robbed, and the burglars took some money and a queer box and—and——"

"Yes, it's true," said Dr. Whitney, nodding his head as Mrs. Martin looked at him. "I heard something about it as I was coming here just now, but I didn't pay much attention. I didn't hear anything about Tom Taylor's house being robbed, though, Teddy."

"Well, maybe Tom's isn't," answered the Curlytop lad. "He's gone home to find out about it."

"Oh," said Mrs. Martin with a smile. "Well, there haven't been any burglars here, I'm glad to say. Now, Teddy, you go and get washed and put on clean clothes. Then you go out and help Jan take care of Baby William."

"Yes'm," said Teddy. But he made up his mind that as soon as he could he would see Tom and find out if any burglars had been at his friend's house.

That afternoon nearly everybody in Cresco knew about Mrs. Ransom's store having been robbed. But that was the only place in the town that had been entered. Much to the disappointment of Ted and Tom, no burglars had been at the Taylor house. And the story of the robbery at Mrs. Ransom's was very simple. As a matter of fact no one knew anything about it.

The woman who kept the store counted up the money in the drawer and she found that some had been taken. Then she looked around her house and shop and found that some silver spoons were gone, and also some things from the store.

"But what I miss most of all," she said to Mrs. Martin, when she came over to talk about her loss, "is a queer box my brother,

who used to be a sailor, brought me from a far-off land. The box was made in Japan, and if you didn't know how to open it you could try all night and never get the cover off or the little drawer out."

"Was anything in the box?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Yes, there was a picture of my brother and some other things I wanted very much to keep to remember my brother by."

"Is he dead?" asked Teddy softly.

"Well, I'm afraid he is by this time," said Mrs. Ransom. "You see, my brother is a sailor. He went off on a voyage a good many years ago, and I haven't heard from him since. I guess he was shipwrecked. He gave me that box just before he went away for the last time, and his picture was in it. That's why I thought so much of it, and why I feel so sorry that the burglars took it. They could have my spoons, the money and everything else, if they'd give me back the queer box with the puzzle top. Nobody knows how to open it, except the man who made it, my brother John and myself."

Mrs. Ransom could not tell how the burglars got in. There was no sign of a door or a window being broken, and Constable Juke,

who came over to look at the store, said he guessed the robbers (or robber, if there was only one) must have sneaked in when Mrs. Ransom was out for a little while, and so have taken the things.

"But I'll keep my eyes open for the robber," he promised, "and if I see him around I'll arrest him and get back your spoons, Mrs. Ransom."

"Get back Brother John's queer box," begged the storekeeper. "I want that more than anything else."

She went back to her little shop, the constable went home, and Ted, Janet, and Baby William sat down to supper.

"How is the sick man?" asked Daddy Martin, when he came home.

"Much better," answered Mother Martin. "Dr. Whitney says he'll soon be sitting up."

"May we go in and see him?" asked Teddy.

"Yes, I think so," answered their mother.

Two days later Ted, Jan, and Baby William were allowed to go into the room where the "tramp," as the children often called him, was sitting up in an easy chair. He looked much better than when he had been carried in a few days before.

Ted and Jan stared at the invalid, who was fast getting better. And Ted suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, he's Uncle Ben!"

"Uncle Ben!" repeated his father. "What do you mean?"

"Why, he looks just like the picture of Uncle Ben in our photograph album," went on Teddy. "Doesn't he, Mother?"

Mrs. Martin looked closely at the man, who had a bushy, brown beard.

"I have been puzzling my head, trying to think whom you did look like," she said to the stranger. "Now I know. It is Uncle Ben!"

CHAPTER VI

OFF TO SILVER LAKE

THE sick man smiled at the children and at Mr. and Mrs. Martin. When he smiled he had a very pleasant face—in fact, he had a very pleasant face at all times, now that he was getting well and strong.

"I'm glad to know I look like some one in this family, which has been so kind to me," he said. "But I'm sorry to say I'm not your Uncle Ben, my dear little Curlytop!"

Ted was surprised to hear the man use the pet name, but then that was not strange, as many persons, seeing Ted and Jan for the first time, called them "Curlytops," for that name seemed just to fit them.

"Aren't you anybody's Uncle Ben?" asked Janet softly. "You look exactly as if you ought to be somebody's Uncle Ben."

The man, sitting up in the easy chair laughed, and his laugh was a pleasant one

and caused the children to like him more than ever.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose I am some one's Uncle Ben. My name, which I have not had a chance to tell you," he went on, "is Benjamin Wilson," and he looked at Mr. and Mrs. Martin. "Some years ago my sister, who lived in New York, had two children, and of course I was Uncle Ben to them. But they both died, and now I am not Uncle Ben to any one."

Just then Baby William, who was always an impulsive little chap, broke away from Jan, who was holding him, and ran to the strange man—no, I must not call him a stranger any longer. I must use his name—Mr. Wilson. Trouble climbed up into the lap of Mr. Wilson, and clasped his baby fingers in the man's brown beard.

"I 'ikes you!" he lisped.

"Do you? Well, I'm glad of that. And I like you!" laughed Mr. Wilson.

"Say!" cried Teddy, struck with a new thought, "couldn't you be our Uncle Ben?"

Mr. Wilson looked at Mr. and Mrs. Martin.

"If you don't mind, the children could call you that," said the mother of the Curlytops.

"The Uncle Ben they speak of, whose picture is in our photograph album, is my uncle, but they always claim him as their own. He does look a great deal like you. His name is Benjamin Thompson, and he lives in Florida. We don't see him very often, but the children like to look at his picture."

"He looks just like you," declared Jan. "Can't we call you Uncle Ben?"

Mr. Wilson did not answer for a moment. Then, looking at Mr. and Mrs. Martin, he said:

"You have been so kind to me that I must tell you my story. After that, if the children want to, they may call me Uncle Ben. But it will be only for a little while, as I hope soon to be able to travel on."

Mr. Wilson's story was quite a long one, and I will not put it all down here. Enough to say that he had worked as a sailor for a number of years, until he lost his health. Then he had to get something else to do. But he did not get better, his relatives all died or he lost track of them, and at last he could not work hard enough, any longer, to make a good living.

"So I turned into what is often called a tramp," he said. "I went from place to

place, trying to get a little work here and there. A doctor told me that if I could live out of doors for six months I would get well and strong again. But the only kind of life out of doors is that on a farm or being a sailor, and I am not strong enough to plow and do farm work, and cannot get on a ship. So I don't know what to do.

"I wandered to Cresco, thinking perhaps I might get work here. I didn't have very much to eat, and when I reached your house I was weak and I just couldn't go any further. Everything seemed to be going around and around, and I—I fell down, I guess."

"Yes, you did," said Teddy, who, like Jan, was eagerly listening to this story. "You fell down, and Miss Ransom told us you were acting funny, and we told mother, and——"

"Yes, and you brought me in and have been very kind to me ever since," said Mr. Wilson. "But I cannot stay here. I must travel on and see if I can't get work out of doors. Then I could get well and strong again."

"And now may we call you Uncle Ben?" asked Jan, when the man had brought his story to a close.

"Of course you may, children!" exclaimed their mother. "If he was Uncle Ben once he is Uncle Ben still, and though he isn't the same Uncle Ben you know down in Florida, I think it will be nice to call him that, since it really is his name."

"Were you a sailor long, Uncle Ben?" asked Ted, now that this point was settled.

"Yes, I was a sailor for several years," was the answer. "I sailed to many queer places, and once I was shipwrecked. Then I was taken ill and found a sailor's life too hard for me. I liked it, though, for I like to be near the water and around boats. All sailors do."

"Miss Ransom's brother was a sailor," said Janet. "And he went off on a ship and maybe he was shipwrecked, and she didn't ever see him again, and he left her a funny box that nobody except two or three could open, but the burglars took the box and did you see them, I mean the burglars, Uncle Ben?" she asked, all out of breath.

"My, that's a lot of talk for a little girl!" exclaimed Mr. Wilson, with a laugh. "And who is this Mrs. Ransom at whose house the burglars called?"

By turns they explained to him what had

happened and how the little store had been robbed.

"It happened the same day you came to our house, Uncle Ben," said Teddy. "And Tom Taylor and I were thinking maybe we could catch the robbers if Constable Juke didn't. So—maybe—did you see any of 'em as you came along—tramping on the road, you know?"

Uncle Ben shook his head.

"If I saw the robbers I didn't know them," he answered. "I was too weak and sick to notice anything. All I wanted was to get to a place where I could lie down and rest, and then have something to eat, perhaps. And I found such a place, thanks to you," he added with a grateful look at Mr. and Mrs. Martin.

"Well, now, children, you have heard and talked enough, I think," said Mrs. Martin to Ted and Jan, who were crowded as close as they could get to their new friend. "Come, Trouble!" and she held out her hands.

"Trouble! Is that his name?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"It's his pet name," answered Mr. Martin. "Though he does get into trouble now and then. But we must let you rest. Please

stay here as long as you like, and you must not go until we have had another talk. I may be able to find out-of-doors work for you that will not be as hard as farming or as work on shipboard."

"I wish you could!" said Uncle Ben eagerly. "I want to work. I don't like being a tramp. And I want to be a real Uncle Ben to these Curlytops!" and he smiled at Ted and Jan.

"I 'ikes you!" said Trouble again. "You be my Unk Ben, too?"

"If you want me to, I will," was the smiling answer.

"Yes—me wants!" said Trouble, as if that settled it. And not until then did he slip down out of the comfortable lap.

"It's nice to have an Uncle Ben, isn't it?" asked Ted of Janet after they had left the room.

"Awful nice," she replied. "I hope he'll stay with us forever."

"And I hope Tom and I can catch the burglars and get back Miss Ransom's queer box," said Teddy. "Maybe she'll give us a reward."

"I'd rather get back Skyrocket than the box," said Janet. "But course I want Miss

Ransom to get her box too. But I want Skyrocket most of all!"

"Oh, so do I!" exclaimed her brother. "Oh, Jan!" he cried. "I just thought of it! Maybe the burglars took our dog!"

"Maybe they did!" agreed Jan.

"I'm going to tell Constable Juke!" decided Ted.

But just then his mother called to ask him to bring in some chips to boil the teakettle, and it was not until some time later that the little boy had a chance to go to the constable about the lost dog. For Skyrocket continued to be lost. Though Ted and Janet hunted all over town for him, and their boy and girl friends did the same, Skyrocket was not to be found, nor did he come back to his sleeping box in the woodshed.

Though Ted and Janet felt very bad about their loss, so many other things happened at the same time that they did not grieve as otherwise they might have done. They had something else to think about.

"Mother, has daddy said any more about where we are going for our vacation?" asked Janet one day.

"Yes; what about Silver Lake?" inquired Teddy.

"Oh, we haven't forgotten about vacation —or Silver Lake, either," said Mrs. Martin with a smile. "I think daddy will have something to tell you this evening. Now, Jan, will you run over to Mrs. Kent's, and ask her if she can let me have the spool of strong, black thread. I want to mend some of Uncle Ben's clothes. Mrs. Ransom was out of it and Mrs. Kent said she had some she would let me have."

"I'll go!" exclaimed Jan. "Will Uncle Ben come out and play with us to-day?"

"Well, perhaps to-morrow," her mother answered. "Dr. Whitney said he must not go too fast all at once. He may take a walk with you to-morrow or next day."

"Goody!" cried Janet.

"That'll be fun!" exclaimed Ted.

The more the Curlytops saw of Uncle Ben the more they liked him. And Mr. and Mrs. Martin, too, were growing fond of the stranger who had fallen almost at their very door. He proved to be a good man, and Mr. Martin was sure he was one who could be trusted. He was slowly getting better, and could walk around the house now and go out into the yard and sit in the shade. But he had not been able, yet, to play with Ted

and Jan, who wanted some one pretty lively to enter into their games.

"You look after Trouble while Janet goes for the thread for me," said Mrs. Martin to Teddy.

"All right, Mother," was the answer. "Come on, Trouble. We'll go down to the brook and I'll show you my water wheel. It splashes around like anything!"

Janet soon reached Mrs. Kent's house and told what was wanted. Mrs. Kent was busy churning. Into a blue tub, shaped like a barrel, she had poured some sour cream. Inside the barrel was a round piece of wood, called a "dasher," and fastened to this was a long stick, like a broom handle. Mrs. Kent made the handle go up and down, and this splashed the dasher in the sour cream, and churned it into butter.

She had just taken off the cover, to look in to see how near the butter was to "coming" when Jan arrived.

"Sit down here, my dear, while I get the thread for you," said Mrs. Kent. "I won't be but a moment."

Janet sat down. Then she thought she would look down in the churn, to see if there were any little round balls of yellow butter

yet. Her mother often churned, and Jan knew all about it.

Over the edge of the churn leaned the little girl. Then she gave a sudden cry and hurried back to her chair. She had hardly sat down in it before Mrs. Kent came back with the spool of thread.

"There you are, Jan," she said. "And how is every one over at your house? I hear you have a new visitor."

"Yes'm, only he's going to be our Uncle Ben now," answered the little girl. "He's getting better, and we're all well. And say, Mrs. Kent, when you get through churning will you please give me back my rubber doll?"

"Give you back your rubber doll! Gracious me, child! what do you mean? I haven't your rubber doll!"

"Yes, you have," insisted Jan, with a funny little smile.

"Why, no, dear, I haven't."

"You can't see her," said Janet. "She's in the butter."

"In the *butter!*"

"I—I just dropped her in the churn," explained the little girl. "You left the cover off, and I looked in to see if the butter had

come, and my rubber doll slipped, and now she—now she's in the churn!"

Mrs. Kent quickly lifted off the cover, which Janet had put partly back on, and as she did so she cried:

"There she is! Oh, Janet!"

"Oh, it won't hurt her," said Janet easily. "She's a rubber doll, you know, and water or milk, or even butter, won't hurt her. You can give her back to me after you make the butter."

"Oh, but Janet dear! To drop a—a rubber doll in my clean cream! And—and——"

"Oh, my doll was awful clean," explained Janet. "I washed her nice just before I came over, really I did."

"Well, that makes it better," said Mrs. Kent with a smile. "Wait and I'll fish her out for you, Janet. I guess my butter won't be spoiled after all. It's a good thing your doll is rubber."

"That's what I thought after she fell in," Janet said. "It won't hurt her a bit. And a lady once told my mamma that buttermilk was good for freckles. Only my doll hasn't any."

The doll was "fished" out of the churn, wiped off and given back to Janet, who

tucked her under one arm and then hurried home with the spool of thread.

The Curlytops waited eagerly for their father to come home that night, for they wanted to ask him about Silver Lake.

"Yes," he told them, after supper, when Janet and Ted had climbed on his knees and Trouble was seated in Uncle Ben's lap, "we will spend our vacation at Silver Lake. I think you will like it there."

"Shall we have a tent?" asked Ted.

"And a boat?" asked Jan.

"An'—an'—a drum?" Trouble wanted to know. "I wants a drum!"

"I don't know about the drum!" said his father with a laugh, "but we'll have a tent, and also a bungalow. We'll eat in the tent when it doesn't rain. We'll also have a boat, for Silver Lake is a fine place for them. And there will be lots of other things so you children can have a good time. But now you must get to bed. We will start for Silver Lake to-morrow."

And you can well believe that when to-morrow came the Curlytops were up bright and early. Such packing and getting ready as there was! But Daddy and Mother Martin, with the help of Patrick and Nora, man-

aged to get things in shape finally. The automobile was brought around to the door. Turnover, the cat, had been shut up in a little crate, for she, also, was to be taken to Silver Lake.

"If we only had Skyrocket!" sighed Jan.

"Maybe he'll find out where we are and come to us," said Ted hopefully.

Trouble stood on the porch, holding Uncle Ben's hand.

At the sight of the man with the brown beard, whom they had learned to like very much, Ted and Jan had a new thought.

"Oh, isn't Uncle Ben coming with us?" cried the Curlytops.

"Yes, of course he is," said Mr. Martin. "I forgot to tell you about him. Uncle Ben is coming with us, and will stay all summer at Silver Lake. He is to have charge of the boats there, for I own quite a number, and also a pavilion and a soda-water stand. Uncle Ben will have charge of them. It will be just the place for him, Dr. Whitney says, and will make him get well."

"I'm sure it will," said Uncle Ben himself. "I can't tell you how much I thank you, Mr. Martin. And I am delighted to spend the summer with the Curlytops at Sil-

ver Lake. Come on now, Trouble, we'll get aboard the auto."

"All aboard for Silver Lake!" cried Ted gaily.

They started off, the whole family and Uncle Ben. Then, just as they reached a turn in the road, they heard a voice shouting:

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!"

Mr. Martin stopped the car.

"It's Constable Juke!" said Mrs. Martin, looking around. "He is waving at us. I guess he wants to speak to us."

"Oh, maybe he's found the burglars and got back Miss Ransom's queer box!" exclaimed Ted.

"And maybe he's found Skyrocket!" echoed Jan.

Hurrying along the road, while the Curlytops waited for him in the automobile, came Constable Juke. What could he want?

CHAPTER VII

TROUBLE IN TROUBLE

"JUST a minute there, Mr. Martin! Just a minute!" called Constable Juke, as he came along the dusty road. "Sorry to call you back," he went on, as he came nearer. "I heard you were going away to-day, and I thought I'd get over before you left. But I didn't, and when I saw you going off down the road I called to you."

"Is it about the burglars that got into Miss Ransom's store and took the puzzle box?" asked Ted.

"No, it isn't about them," answered the constable. "Though I hope to have 'em soon, the rascals! Just wait until I catch my breath and I'll tell you."

He sat down on a stone at the side of the road, while Mr. Martin, Uncle Ben, and the others in the automobile waited.

"Is it our dog Skyrocket?" asked Janet.

"Yes, it's about him," said the constable.

"Oh, have you found him?" cried the two Curlytops both at once, while Trouble, who heard the name of the pet he liked so much, said:

"Me want Skywocket, too!"

"I'm sorry to say I haven't got your dog," went on the constable. "But I ran after you to ask whether he's black or white. You see, I forgot whether you said white or black when you told me about him, Mr. Martin. And I don't want to be looking for a black dog, if it's a white one that's lost. And I don't want to be looking for a white dog if it's a black one that's lost. Sometimes I had it in mind that it was a black dog you owned, and again it struck me that it was white. I wanted to be sure about it. Now if he is a white dog——"

"Skyrocket is mostly black," said Teddy.

"But he's got a little white on him," added Janet.

"But you'd call him a black dog, I guess," said Daddy Martin. "And he was a curly black dog, too, and not very large. Did you find any such lost dog as that, Constable Juke?"

"No, I didn't, I'm sorry to say," was the

answer. "But now that I know for sure what Skyrocket looks like I'll write it down on a piece of paper. Then I'll have it with me always, and I won't forget. If I do, every time I see a lost dog I'll take out the paper and read that Skyrocket was black."

"I hope you'll find him," said Teddy.

"So do I," echoed Janet.

"I hope the same thing myself," remarked the constable. "Well, now I'm sure in my own mind I can make a better hunt for him. I sort of plan to look for your dog and the burglars at the same time," he added to Mr. Martin.

"Well, I don't believe the burglars that robbed Mrs. Ransom's store had anything to do with Skyrocket's going away," said Mr. Martin. "The children's dog may have run away himself."

"Oh, Sky wouldn't do that!" cried Teddy. Sometimes he called his dog "Sky" instead of "Skyrocket."

"Well, the best of dogs run away once in a while," said Mr. Martin. "However, we wish you good luck, Constable Juke."

"Thank you," answered the man. He had written down on the back of an envelope, with a stub of a pencil, the color of the Cur-

lytops' dog, so he would know Skyrocket if he saw him.

"Well, I'll be getting back now," said the constable, as he got up and knocked some dust from his shoes with a bunch of weeds he pulled from the roadside. "Sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Oh, we aren't in any hurry," replied Mr. Martin. "We're going to Silver Lake for the summer."

The automobile started off once more, Mr. Martin steering it down the road on the way to Silver Lake.

"When are we going to get there?" asked Teddy, after his father and mother had finished talking about the queer way Constable Juke had run after them to ask about the color of Skyrocket.

"Oh, we shall get there some time this afternoon," answered Ted's father.

"Do you like it near the water?" asked Uncle Ben, for the children now called him by this name all the while.

"Oh, I just love it!" exclaimed Janet. "And it's good for my dolls, too. They like to be near the cool lake."

"How did the rubber doll get over her swim in the churn?" asked Uncle Ben, with

a smile, for Mrs. Kent had told the story of Jan's dropped doll.

"Oh, she's all right," answered the little girl. "Some of the buttermilk got inside her, 'cause she's got a hole in her back. But I make believe feed her that way, lots of times, so I guess she likes it."

"Will you show me how to sail a boat on Silver Lake, Uncle Ben?" asked Teddy, as the automobile rolled on.

"Yes, if your father lets you go out in one," was the answer.

"Will you, Daddy?"

"Will I what?" inquired Mr. Martin, for he had not heard what Teddy said, as, just then, a rooster ran across the road in front of the automobile and Mr. Martin did not want to run over the crowing chap.

"Will you let Uncle Ben take me out and show me how to sail a boat?" asked Teddy.

"Oh, yes, I think so—if you'll be careful," was the reply.

"Oh, I'll be careful," promised Uncle Ben. "I used to be a sailor and I once worked at a dock where rowboats and sailboats were rented out," he went on, "and lots of times I'd take out parties of children. I had to be very careful of them."

That was one thing that Mr. and Mrs. Martin liked Uncle Ben for—he was so kind and careful about children. They felt that they could trust the Curlytops and Trouble with him at any time, even though they had not known him very long.

"Oh, I know I'll just love it at Silver Lake!" exclaimed Jan, when she had heard Ted talking about the boat rides he was to have.

"We'll have plenty of fun!" decided the little boy. "I wish we'd hurry up and get there!"

"So do I!" echoed his sister.

The day was rather warm, and after having passed through a little village the automobile was driven past a little wayside ice-cream and soda-water stand.

"Let's stop here and cool off," said Mother Martin. "I'm sure some ice-cream would be good for the children, and I know I'd like a drink of lemonade."

"Yes, we can stop here," decided Daddy Martin. "The automobile wants a drink, too. I forgot to put water in when we started. I'll get some here."

The ice-cream stand was kept by a boy about fifteen years old. He said he took

charge of it every summer, as soon as school was out, so he could earn money to help his mother, who lived not far away.

"I'll get some water for your auto while you're eating the ice-cream," said the boy. "I can get it from a well right back of my stand. And you can sit over there under the trees. It's shady and cool there."

"Yes, we'll get out of the auto and walk around a little," decided Mrs. Martin. "One of my feet is asleep."

"Did you sing it to sleep, 'ike you sing me to sleep?" asked Trouble.

"No, indeed!" laughed his mother. "My foot went to sleep of itself."

What she meant was, as you know, that her foot felt as if "pins and needles" were sticking in it—you know how it is if you lie down with your head on your arm sometimes. When you try to move your fingers they feel numb, as if they were "asleep."

But a little walk around under the trees near the roadside ice-cream stand made Mrs. Martin's foot "wake up;" and then the Curlytops, Baby William, Uncle Ben, and Mr. and Mrs. Martin sat down to enjoy the good things which the boy set on a little table for them.

"Now I'll go and get the water for your auto," said the lad, after Mr. Martin had paid him.

They sat there eating the ice-cream, and sipping the lemonade, which Mr. Martin also ordered, and in a little while a man whom Mr. Martin knew drove past, stopping his carriage in the road while the Curlytops' father talked with him a moment.

"Come, children, we'll go and see how the boy is coming along putting the water in daddy's auto," suggested Mrs. Martin, when the ice-cream had been finished and the last drop of lemonade was gone.

"This is a nice place here," said Teddy, as he got down from his chair and looked around the country farm, near which the ice-cream stand had been built.

"But not as nice as Silver Lake," said Janet.

"Oh, no, course not!" agreed her brother.

"Where's Trouble?" suddenly asked Mrs. Martin, as she brushed some crumbs off her dress, for she had opened a box of crackers she had brought from a supply in the automobile.

"He was cleaning out his ice-cream dish a moment ago," answered Uncle Ben.

"And he asked me if there was any left in mine," added Jan.

"But he's gone!" cried her mother. "He must have slipped away when I leaned over to pick up my handkerchief that I had dropped. We must find him!"

"I hope Trouble isn't in trouble again," said Uncle Ben.

"Ted, go and call your father," said Mrs. Martin. Her husband was out in the road talking to the man who sat in a carriage.

As Teddy hurried out to do this, suddenly, from somewhere back of the ice-cream stand, came the shrill voice of Baby William.

"I dot him! I dot him!" cried Trouble. "Tum on, Teddy—Jan! I dot him all wite!"

"What kind of trouble is Trouble in now?" thought Uncle Ben.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WIND BLEW

EVERY one stood still on hearing Trouble's voice.

"There he is!" cried Mrs. Martin. "Did you hear him?"

"I heard him," said Uncle Ben.

"But where can he be?" asked Mrs. Martin. "I can hear him, but I can't see him."

"Who's that?" asked Mr. Martin, coming back from the road, holding Teddy's hand. For his little boy had run down and told him to come back, though Teddy forgot to say what for. "What's the matter?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Oh, it's Trouble again," answered his wife. "He slipped away after we had finished our ice-cream, and now I can't see him, though he just now called to us."

And, once more, came the voice of Trouble, saying:

"I dot him! Tum an' det him, Teddy!"

"He's back of my stand!" cried the ice-cream boy. "His voice comes from there."

"Come on! Let's look!" exclaimed Uncle Ben.

"Here I is!" came the voice.

"Why—why—that sounded just as if it came from that dog kennel!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin, pointing to one not far away.

"Is there a dog in there?" asked Uncle Ben of the boy.

"Yes. At least, a puppy," was the answer.

"Trouble! Trouble, where are you?" called his mother.

In answer a little tousled head was thrust out of the opening, or front door, of the dog kennel, and the head was followed by the body of Trouble himself. He was smiling, though his face was dirty, and in his arms he held a little black puppy.

"I dot him!" he cried. "I dot our Sky-wocket back aden!"

You should have heard Janet and Teddy laugh then.

"That isn't Skyrocket, Trouble, dear!" said Janet.

"That isn't our dog at all!" added Teddy, laughing so hard he could hardly speak.

Trouble seemed much surprised. He held the puppy, which was a very small one, away from him so he might look at it better. Then he brought it back into his lap as he sat on the ground outside the kennel.

"Dis not Skywocket?" he asked.

"Why, no, Trouble. That dog belongs to this boy," said Mrs. Martin. "How did you come to crawl in there with the puppy?"

"I wanted Skywocket," explained Trouble. "I did see a doggie. He wanted me to tum an' play wif him, an' I did tum. An' I went into his little house, an' we had fun. Him is a nice doggie and he kissed me on my face 'ist 'ike Skywocket!"

"Yes, I dare say he did!" laughed Mrs. Martin. "Most puppies will lick you with their tongue if they get a chance. But put the little doggie down now, Trouble, and come to me. My! but you are dirty."

"You can take him over to our house and wash him," suggested the ice-cream boy. "We have lots of water at our house. My little brother gets dirty, too, and has to be washed every day."

It did not take long to get Trouble clean, with the big basin of warm water and a little soap which the mother of the boy who kept

the ice-cream stand brought out for Mrs. Martin.

"Now I think we are ready to travel on again," said Daddy Martin, when they were once more in the automobile.

"Skywocket not come?" asked Trouble, waving his hand toward the kennel of the puppy into which he had crawled. "Me want Skywocket."

"That isn't Skyrocket!" laughed Teddy, though he felt quite sorry when he thought of his lost pet. "That fellow is this boy's dog!"

"Yes; and I'd hate to have any one take him away," said the ice-cream boy. "Did your dog die?" he inquired.

"No," answered Janet. "But he dis—he dis—— Oh, what's that funny word you told me, Uncle Ben?" she asked.

"Disappeared," answered Mr. Wilson. "Skyrocket disappeared. That is, he went off all at once, just like a skyrocket," he added.

"We don't know if the same burglars took him that took the queer box from Miss Ransom," said Teddy, "but Skyrocket is gone. But of course we wouldn't take your dog!" he added quickly. "My little brother doesn't

know dogs very well, and he surely did like Skyrocket."

"Skywocket nice dog!" exclaimed Trouble. "Me 'ike dis dog, too!"

"Yes, you like a good many things," laughed Mrs. Martin, as she smoothed out Baby William's hair. "You like to get in the dirt, too!"

Good-byes were said to the ice-cream boy and his mother, and when a supply of lollypops had been bought for Ted, Jan and Trouble, Mr. Martin started the automibile, and once more they were on their way to Silver Lake.

Nothing more worth telling you about happened until they reached the place where the Curlytops expected to have such good times with Uncle Ben on the water. The only little thing that really did happen was that Trouble dropped his lollypop when they were almost at the lake, and he wanted his father to stop the machine and get his bit of candy on a stick.

But as Trouble had eaten more than half of the lollypop, and as it was wet and sticky and had dropped in the dust, Mrs. Martin did not think it would be a good thing to give it back to Trouble.

"I'll give you another when we get to Silver Lake," she said, and with that the little fellow was satisfied.

On chugged the automobile, up hill and down, through the woods, now and then passing through small towns, and finally Mr. Martin said:

"There it is!"

"What?" asked Ted and Jan both at once.

"Silver Lake!" answered their father. "See it just ahead of you, at the bottom of the hill, sparkling in the sun!"

He pointed, and the children saw it. They had been to Silver Lake once or twice before, but they did not remember much about it.

"What a beautiful place!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, as he leaned forward to look. "I've seen many a bit of water," he added, "but none as pretty as that."

"Do you like it?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Very much, indeed. I think I shall be very happy there, and I know I'll get well and strong."

Silver Lake was very much like its name. It sparkled like a new, shiny piece of silver in the sun. Around the lake were many trees, making a regular picnic woods. And indeed Silver Lake was what is called a pic-

nic resort. That is, a company had put up on one of the shores a merry-go-round and a place where you could "shoot the chutes"—that is, slide down a wooden hill into the water, riding in queer little wooden boats. There was also a roller coaster, places to get ice-cream and candy, and one place where you could get a regular dinner.

There were many things to amuse children, and grown-ups also. There were sailboats and rowboats to hire, and there was a motor boat in which one could ride all around the lake for ten cents.

Silver Lake was quite a large body of water, and the picnic grounds were only a small part of it. Around the shores of the rest of the lake were summer cottages and bungalows, and it was to one of these bungalows, which he owned, that Mr. Martin was taking his family to spend their vacation.

Mr. Martin also owned some of the boats on the lake, and it was to take charge of these boats, hiring them out to picnic parties who wanted to ride in them, that Uncle Ben had been brought to Silver Lake.

"You can stay on the boat pier in a little office, and look after my sailboats, canoes, and rowboats," said Mr. Martin to Uncle

Ben. "That will keep you outdoors, and make you well and strong."

"And can we go out in boats with him?" asked Teddy, as they alighted from the automobile in front of the bungalow in which they were to stay.

"Oh, yes," answered Mr. Martin. "I think you will have lots of fun on the water with Uncle Ben. He will not have to be busy all the time, as he will have a man and a boy to help him."

"Oh, it's just dandy here!" cried Teddy, as he ran about on the soft ground under the trees in front of the bungalow.

"We'll have lots of fun!" echoed Janet.

Trouble got slowly down from his mother's arms. He walked this way and that, looking out at the lake, which was shining like silver among the trees, and he looked up at the clouds floating overhead.

"Me 'ikes it here!" he decided. "Maybe we find Skywocket!"

"Oh, isn't he cute!" cried Janet, and she hugged and kissed her little brother. "But, Trouble, dear, I don't b'lieve Skyrocket will come here."

"I don't think so, either," said Teddy. "But still he might. Once we hid away up

in Tom Taylor's barn, in the hay—'member, Jan?—and Sky found us there."

"Yes, he did," agreed Janet. "But this is a long way off."

"Don't think too much about your lost dog," advised Mrs. Martin. "If he is lost he is lost, and that is all there is to it. It's too bad, of course, and I wish he were back. But you must make the best of it, and, some day, maybe we'll have another dog."

"No," said Ted slowly, as he thought it over. "If I can't have Skyrocket I don't want any dog."

"Me, either," said Janet. "But maybe he'll come back to us."

"And maybe Tom Taylor and me—I mean I—maybe we'll find the burglars that went into Miss Ransom's store," said Teddy.

"How can you, when Tom Taylor isn't here?" asked Janet.

"That's so," agreed her brother. "I wish Tom was here," he went on. "I like to play with him. Could he come and stay with us?" he asked his mother.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin looked at one another and laughed in a queer way.

"Oh, have you got a secret?" cried Janet, for she had seen her father and mother laugh

like this before. "Have you a secret?"

"Maybe—just a little one," said her mother, still smiling. "But now you children play around, while daddy and I take the things out of the auto and get ready for supper."

Supper was to be the first meal in the bungalow at Silver Lake, and plenty of things to eat had been brought along, so that not much cooking would have to be done the day the Curlytops arrived. Later on Nora, the cook, was to come and help Mrs. Martin.

"I can help get supper," said Uncle Ben.

"All right, then we'll let you help," said Mrs. Martin. "Now, Jan and Ted, you take good care of Trouble while I'm busy."

"Yes'm," promised the two Curlytops.

They had on their play clothes, and it was not long before they were running here and there, rolling about and tumbling about on the soft carpet of green moss under the forest trees. Trouble laughed and squealed with delight.

There were a number of bungalows near the one that Mr. Martin had bought for his family, but, as yet, no one was in them. The owners would be down in another week or two, Mrs. Martin said.

Not far away from "Sunnyside," as the Martin bungalow was named, was the boat dock owned by the children's father, and there were several sailboats and rowboats tied there.

Uncle Ben was helping Mrs. Martin get supper, Mr. Martin was busy putting away the groceries he had brought in the automobile, and everything was being put in "ship-shape" order, as Uncle Ben would say, when Janet, followed by Trouble, came hurrying into the bungalow.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the little girl, and her mother could see that she was much excited. "Oh, dear! He's gone!"

"Who's gone?" asked Mrs. Martin, though in another instant, not seeing Teddy, she guessed who it was that Janet meant.

"Ted—Teddy!" gasped Janet. "He's gone! The wind blew him away!"

CHAPTER IX

WHAT TROUBLE FOUND

Mrs. Martin almost dropped the egg she had in her hand, and Uncle Ben let fall to the floor a pan he was going to put on the stove in which to boil some potatoes. Luckily, he had not yet put the water in it.

Daddy Martin came hurrying in from where he was getting ready to run the automobile under a shed. He stooped down and looked closely at Janet.

"What did you say?" he asked. "Are you playing some game, Jan?"

"Oh, no, it isn't a game!" exclaimed the little Curlytop girl. "The wind blew, and it just blew Teddy away. He's out in the middle of the lake now, I guess!"

"The lake! The wind! I see what she means!" cried Uncle Ben.

Out of the door, and out on the bungalow porch ran Uncle Ben, followed by Mr. and

Mrs. Martin. Jan, still holding Trouble by the hand, followed more slowly.

"There he is!" cried Mr. Martin, pointing toward Silver Lake, which, just then, was glowing red from the setting sun. "Ted is out in a boat."

"Yes, that's what I mean," added Janet. "Teddy got in a boat . He wanted me to come, and Trouble, too, but I wouldn't. But Teddy got in a boat, and the wind did blow him away, it did!"

"That's what I thought the minute she spoke about the wind!" cried Uncle Ben.

"Oh, Teddy!" cried Mrs. Martin. "Is it deep out there?" she asked her husband.

"No, not very," he answered. "The little tyke! I thought I told him not to get into a boat alone," he went on.

"Never mind about that, now!" cried Mrs. Martin. "How are we going to get him back?"

"Oh, I'll do that easily," said Uncle Ben. "I'll row out and get him. I didn't know he knew enough to hoist the sail on a boat," he added.

"You can't get him that way," said Mr. Martin. "The wind is blowing harder now, and the boat is sailing faster, even if Ted

doesn't know enough to fasten the sail in the right way. You can't get him by rowing out to him, Uncle Ben."

"Then how can we reach him?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"In a motor boat," her husband answered. "There's one over at the next pier. We can row over there, start the motor boat, and soon bring back Teddy and the sailboat."

Uncle Ben and Daddy Martin hurried down to where the rowboats were tied. Getting into one, they quickly sent it skimming over the water to the next pier. They could row over much more quickly than they could have walked around the shore.

Mrs. Martin, with Jan and Trouble standing beside her, eagerly watched, now and then looking out to where the sailboat was drifting slowly down the lake.

Pretty soon she heard the sound:

"Chug! Chug! Chuggity-chug-chug!"

"They've started!" she exclaimed.

Janet, too, knew what that sound meant. It was the noise made by the engine of the motor boat. Soon the boat, which ran something like an automobile, and did not have to be rowed nor need a sail blown by the wind, moved away from the dock, and, with

Daddy Martin steering it, went out to bring Teddy back to shore.

A sailboat can go very fast in a swift breeze when the sail is rightly hoisted, but even a fast sailboat is not as fast as a motor boat, and soon Daddy Martin and Uncle Ben, in their craft, were coming closer and closer to the tiny ship in which Teddy was riding.

The little fellow had not meant to go sailing all alone in this way, and he was as much surprised as any one when the boat moved away from the dock. But he was a wise little chap, and when he found himself going out, away from the dock and the shore, he very properly sat down on the bottom of the boat, out of the way of the swinging boom, and kept still. It was the best thing he could have done.

But when he saw the motor boat coming up behind him, and noticed his father and Uncle Ben in it, Teddy could keep still no longer.

"Daddy! Daddy!" he cried. "Take me out! Take me home!"

"Yes! Yes! We're coming! We'll take you home all right," said his father.

"Sit down! Sit down!" shouted Uncle

Ben. "Sit down, Ted, or the boom will knock you overboard."

Teddy did not know exactly what the "boom" was, but afterward he learned that it was the big stick on the bottom of the sail that swung from side to side. And if Ted had sat up too straight this stick was likely to hit him. Teddy knew that to fall "overboard" meant to fall out of the boat. He had fallen "overboard" off the raft that day he played with Tom, and he had not forgotten.

So when Teddy heard Uncle Ben shouting to him to sit down the little Curlytop boy did this at once. And it is a good thing he did, too, for a moment later the wind swung around the lower part of the sail, with the big, heavy wooden boom, and Teddy would have been knocked into the lake by it if he had not been on the bottom of the boat.

"That's the boy!" cried Uncle Ben, as he saw that Teddy had minded. "Now stay that way until we get you out."

On chugged the motor boat, and soon it was alongside the sailboat. Uncle Ben gave a jump from the motor boat into the sailing craft, and, in an instant, had loosed the ropes that held up the sail. Down it came, and, as

the wind no longer had anything to blow on, the sailboat moved more slowly. But, no matter how fast it moved, the motor boat was beside it now, and Mr. Martin tied both craft together with a rope.

"Why, Teddy! what made you go sailing all alone?" his father asked the little boy, as he took him into the motor boat. "Didn't I tell you not to get into a boat unless your mother, Uncle Ben, or I were with you?"

"Yes, Daddy. But I—I—forgot!" confessed Teddy. "I won't do it again!"

"That's right!" exclaimed Mr. Martin. "And now how did you come to haul up the sail? I'm sure there wasn't any sail on this boat when we arrived at Silver Lake. How did you get the sail up, Teddy? You aren't strong enough to hoist it yourself."

"No, I didn't do it," admitted Teddy. "A man did it for me."

"A man? What man?" Mr. Martin asked, and he looked in surprise at Uncle Ben.

"I didn't do it, that's sure," said Mr. Wilson. "And I didn't see any strange man around the dock."

"Nor I," said Mr. Martin. "Are you sure, Teddy, that a man hoisted the sail for you?"

"Well, I didn't ask him to," went on the little boy. "I was playing around with Jan and Trouble. You were up in the bungalow —you and Uncle Ben and mother."

"Yes, I know that part," said Mr. Martin. "Go on. Tell me who put up the sail for you. He shouldn't have done it, whoever it was."

"They didn't do it for *me,* zactly," went on Teddy. "I was playing, and I said to Jan, 'let's get in a boat' and she said, 'no,' and I went down to get in and I saw a man then putting up the sail."

"Did the man say anything?" asked Uncle Ben.

"He looked at me kind of funny," replied Teddy. "An' then he said: 'What? You here? Then I've got to run!' "

"The man was surprised, was he, Ted?" asked his father.

"Yes, he was terrible s'prised, I guess," answered the little chap.

"Did he run away?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Yes, he ran away as soon as he saw me. But he left the sail up on the boat, and I thought maybe daddy sent him to put it up for me, and I got into the boat, and the wind blew, and it did blow me away, it did."

"Yes, Janet told us that part!" said his father. "It's lucky she saw you before you were blown clear across the lake. I can't understand what man it was, though, who hoisted the sail," said Mr. Martin.

"Have you any man working for you around the boats?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Not yet, though I'm going to hire a man and a boy to help you," answered the father of the Curlytops. "This man must have been a stranger, though why he should hoist the sail on one of my boats and then run at the sight of Teddy is more than I can make out."

"Maybe he has been using the sailboat while you were at home in Cresco," suggested Uncle Ben. "He didn't hear us come, and he came down to the dock to take a ride as he had been used to doing. Then he saw Teddy. He thought he might be caught, so he ran away."

"I guess that's how it was," agreed Mr. Martin. "But I'd like to know who the man was. What did he look like, Teddy, boy?"

"Oh, he—he was—he was just a—man!"

"I know," replied his father. "But was he a man like Uncle Ben or like me?"

Teddy looked first at his father, then at Uncle Ben.

"He was like both of you," he said. "That's the kind of man he was."

"We can't tell very much from that," said Mr. Wilson, with a smile.

"No, but we must be on the watch," said Mr. Martin. "I don't want strange men hoisting the sails on my boats. They might sail off in one and not come back."

"Maybe it was a burglar!" exclaimed Teddy. "I guess he looked like a burglar—only I never saw one."

"No, I presume you never did," agreed his father. "But we must get back to shore, or your mother will be worried more than she is now. Though she can see that you are all right, I suppose. Anyhow I'll make sure."

Mr. Martin stood up in the motor boat and held Teddy high in his arms, so that Mrs. Martin, on shore, could see that the little boy was safe. Teddy's mother waved her handkerchief, to let her husband know that she had seen and understood.

Then the motor boat was started again, and back to the dock it went, towing the sailing craft.

"Oh, Teddy, what made you do it!" cried his mother as she clasped him in her arms.

"He won't do it again!" declared Mr. Martin, after he had explained how it happened.

"But it was very curious!" said Mrs. Martin. "I don't like it."

"I wants to go in sailboat!" cried Trouble, as they all walked up from the lake to the bungalow.

"Now let's settle this once and for all," said Mr. Martin solemnly. "None of you children is to get into a boat unless one of us is with you—don't forget!"

He shook his finger at the two Curlytops and at Trouble. They knew what this meant, and each one promised.

"Come to supper!" called Uncle Ben a little later, and they sat down to the table which had been set under the tent in front of the bungalow.

Never was there a jollier meal. Then came a delightful time of sitting under the trees in the cool of the evening, until Mrs. Martin said in a low voice:

"Well, Trouble has gone to by-low land in my arms, and I think it must be time for Ted and Jan to see what they are going to

dream about. They've had a long day of it."

"That's right!" agreed Uncle Ben. "Come, Curlytops—tumble in! as we used to say on shipboard when we went to bed."

There were a number of beds in the bungalow, and soon the Curlytops, as well as Trouble, were asleep.

Teddy was having a queer dream, about sailing in a boat with his dog Skyrocket perched up on top of the mast, when suddenly the little Curlytop lad was awakened by hearing Trouble calling to him. Ted opened his eyes to see his little brother, in his baggy pyjamas, standing beside the cot bed where Teddy slept. Trouble lifted up something round and black and shiny and toppled it over into Ted's cot.

" 'Ook what Trouble found!" cried the little fellow. "Trouble det him down by de 'ake, and bringed him in. He's nice, but he not as nice as Skywocket! He don't bark, but he stick out hims head an' pull it in a'den! 'Ook what Trouble found!"

CHAPTER X

JANET'S FLOWERS

At first Ted was not quite sure whether he was fully awake or whether he was still dreaming. But when he took a second look at his little brother Trouble, standing beside the cot bed, Ted began to feel pretty sure he was no longer sleeping.

"'Ook what Trouble found!" went on the little fellow, laughing joyously. "Hims is 'ike a big stone, but hims isn't a stone. Hims is a'ive, hims is!"

Ted looked at the funny, half-round, black object Trouble held. If Ted's eyes had been more widely opened, and if he had not been so suddenly awakened from his sleep, he might have known what it was Baby William had found so early in the morning.

The night had been rather warm, and, to be cooler, Teddy had left his feet and legs uncovered. One bare leg was outside the covers

on the cot now, and the first thing Teddy knew he felt something cold and clammy crawling over his leg, and then something scratched him.

"Oh! Ouch!" cried Teddy, sitting up in bed. "What have you there, Trouble? Did you put a snake on me?"

"Hims no snake!" laughed Baby William. "'Ook at him."

Then Teddy rubbed his eyes so he could see better, and he saw what it was Trouble had brought in. It was crawling about on the bed now—sliding on and off Ted's bare leg, and the little Curlytop boy saw what made the scratchy feeling.

"It's a mud turtle!" cried Teddy. "Oh, where'd you get him, Trouble?"

"Trouble find mud turkle in woods, down by lake," was the answer. "Trouble bring turkle in to Ted. Nice turkle!"

"Yes, he's nice all right," agreed Ted, with a laugh. "But I don't want him in my bed. Take him out, Trouble, and I'll get dressed. It's morning!" cried Ted, as he saw the sun shining into the bungalow.

"Trouble give turkle to Jan," murmured the little chap as he reached for the crawling creature. "Jan 'ike a turkle, too!"

"No, don't put it in Janet's bed!" advised Teddy.

"All wite," assented Trouble. "Me give him Unk Ben!"

"No, don't do that, either!" cried Teddy, catching his little brother, just as Baby William was about to toddle into the room where Mr. Wilson slept. "Take the turtle outside, Trouble. I'll come out pretty soon and we'll have some fun. Don't let him run away."

"All wite," agreed Trouble, and out he went with the queer creature.

"What's going on out there?" called Mrs. Martin from her room. "Trouble, where are you?" she asked, looking over to the crib where Baby William had been put to sleep the night before. Mrs. Martin saw that the crib was empty, and she guessed what had happened. Trouble had awakened early, and had slipped out without waiting to be dressed. "What are you doing?" his mother called.

"Oh, he's all right," answered Teddy, who was dressing himself now. "He went down to the lake, found a mud turtle and put it in my bed. He woke me up. The turtle crawled on my bare leg, and I thought at

first it was a snake. Trouble wanted to put the turtle in Jan's bed and then in Uncle Ben's, but I wouldn't let him."

"That's right!" said his father. "Trouble, put the turtle down and come in here!"

"Yes," answered Trouble, and he did what he was told at once, as he nearly always did when his father spoke.

In a little while the two Curlytops were dressed, as was the rest of the family, and soon they were sitting down to the breakfast table.

"Where's the turtle, Trouble?" asked Jan, as she got up from the table. "I want to see it, but I don't want it in bed with me."

Trouble looked around on the floor.

"Turkle gone!" he said, not seeing his new pet.

"Gone!" cried Ted. "Why, I told you to watch him, Trouble. We could 'a' had a lot of fun with that turtle, and now you let him get away!"

"Did you put him anywhere, Trouble?" asked Janet.

"Ess, me put him somewhere," answered Baby William, still stooping down and looking around the floor.

"Well, where'd you put him?" asked Ted.

Trouble shook his head.

"Me fordet!" he said simply.

That was often the way with Trouble. He would sometimes put his toys, or one of Janet's dolls, maybe, away and forget where he had left it.

"I guess he put the turtle down on the floor when I called him to breakfast," said Mrs. Martin, "and the turtle crawled off. Never mind, there'll be plenty else to play with."

"And maybe we can find another turtle," said Ted. "Come on, Jan, we'll look."

"I have something else I want to do now," answered the little girl.

"All right. Then I'll go on a turtle hunt," decided Ted. "Come on, Trouble. Show me where you found the one that got away."

"Don't go too far, and keep out of the boats!" called Mrs. Martin to her two little boys, as they walked away, hand in hand.

There was quite a lot of work to do about the bungalow to get it in order for the summer visit, and soon Mrs. Martin, her husband, and Uncle Ben were busy. Trouble and Ted were in plain sight down on the shore of the lake, looking for turtles, so their mother was not worried about them.

Janet was on the porch, taking some of her toys from the box in which they had been packed, and Uncle Ben was getting ready to fix the rudder of the motor boat. The rudder was under water, and Uncle Ben said he would put on a pair of rubber boots to wade out and see what was wrong with the steering gear.

"Hello! Something is wrong here!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, as he put his left foot in one of the pair of boots that Daddy Martin brought out of a closet for him.

"Something wrong? Aren't they big enough for you?" asked Mr. Martin.

"One is, but the other doesn't seem to be," answered the man who had once been a sailor. "There's something in this boot. I can't get it on!"

He had his foot half way in, but now he pulled it out and thrust in his hand. As he did this Uncle Ben gave a laugh.

"I've found Trouble's lost turtle," he called.

"Where was it?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"In this rubber boot," answered Uncle Ben. "Trouble must have dropped the turtle in the boot, and then he forgot about it. Here it is!"

He drew forth his hand and there, surely enough, out came the turtle in it.

"No wonder I couldn't get my foot in!" laughed Uncle Ben. "The turtle took up all the room."

"Put it in a box so it can't get away," said Daddy Martin. "The children can play with it. They won't hurt it, and the turtle isn't the snapping kind, so it won't bite them."

The queer pet Trouble had found was put in a wooden box, high enough on the sides to keep the creature from crawling out. Then Uncle Ben put on the other rubber boot and fixed the motor boat.

Meanwhile Trouble and Teddy, walking up and down the shore of the lake, were looking for more turtles. They did not see any, but they found plenty of other things to make them happy. There were frogs, and there were little fishes swimming close to shore in the shallow water. But every time the boys tried to catch a fish or a frog they missed. The fishes gave little flips of their tails and swam away, and the frogs hopped into deeper water.

There were other little swimming creatures, however—tiny black tadpoles, that, some day, would turn into frogs. And by

scooping up water in their cupped hands Ted and Trouble caught some of the "taddies."

"Let's put 'em in a can and watch 'em turn into frogs," suggested Ted. "That'll be fun, won't it, Trouble?"

"Um—yes," agreed the smaller boy.

Ted found an old tomato can, filled it with water, and then he and his brother caught more tadpoles. Soon they had a dozen swimming around in the water of the can.

"Now we'll sit down and watch 'em turn into frogs," said Ted, as he carried the can over to a shady place.

Uncle Ben had told him that the tadpoles, though they had a tail at first, lost it after a while, and then grew two feet, and then, later, had four feet and legs, and finally were frogs.

For some little time Ted and Trouble sat and looked into the can of wiggling tadpoles. Then, as no change took place and as not a single frog hopped out, Ted exclaimed:

"Oh, I guess they won't change while we watch 'em. Let's go away now, an' when we come back they'll be frogs."

"All wite," agreed Trouble. They did not know that it takes many days for a tadpole to change into a frog.

"Come on, let's go get a cookie, and then we'll see what Jan's doing," suggested Ted, as he led his brother toward the bungalow. "Maybe she'll come with us an' have some fun now. Maybe Uncle Ben will take us out in a boat. Shall we do that, Trouble?"

"All wite—'ess!" was the answer.

Janet was tired of her unpacking, and after each of the children had been given a sugar cookie by Mrs. Martin, they started out again to look for something to do. There were many ways of having fun at Silver Lake, even though the picnic season had not started yet.

When it did, and when the merry-go-round and the shoot-the-chutes were going, there would be more ways of having fun.

"Don't go too far off, children!" called Mrs. Martin to the Curlytops and Trouble. "Uncle Ben is going to take you for a boat ride before dinner."

"Oh, that'll be fun!" cried Ted.

"We're just going a little way," added Janet.

The three strolled toward the lake, down the winding path. Janet saw, in a clump of trees, some pretty blue flowers.

"Oh, I know what I'm going to do!" she

cried. "I'm going to pick a bouquet for mother to put on the table. It looks so pretty! I'll get some flowers!"

"I'll pick some green ferns to go with the bouquet," added Ted, as he saw a clump near the blue flowers. "Come on, Trouble, you help me pick the ferns."

Janet started toward the clump of blue flowers. She did not know that the posies grew on the edge of a hole that was filled with water and very sticky mud. As the grass grew tall near the edge of the hole Janet could not see it.

Up to the pretty blossoms she ran, and she reached her hands out to pick some. Ted, who was watching her, suddenly saw his sister go out of sight. He knew she had fallen down, but he did not know just how it had happened.

"Janet! Janet!" he cried. "What's the matter?"

"Ted!" she answered. "Oh, Teddy, I fell in! Come and get me out!"

CHAPTER XI

TROUBLE IN THE AIR

TEDDY MARTIN ran to the edge of the little bank over the top of which he had seen Janet's head a moment before. The boy had his hands full of ferns, but he dropped these as he ran forward, calling:

"I'm coming, Jan! I'm coming! Wait for me!"

"I can't get out!" Janet answered. "I'm stuck fast!

"And I'm going down farther all the while!" she called. "Oh, Oh! You must get me out, Teddy!"

"Yes, Janet! Yes, I'll get you out!" cried Teddy. He flung himself face downward on the grassy bank below which Janet was caught in a trap of mud. It was soft mud, and did not, of course, hurt her, but it was so sticky that she was held fast.

"Can't you pull your legs out, Janet, and

walk over to me?" asked Teddy. "If you could get over here I could take hold of your hands and pull you the rest of the way out. Try to pull your legs loose!"

"I did try," Janet answered. "I can pull one leg out, but then the other leg sticks down deeper in the mud. Then when I try to pull my first leg out, that's stuck, too."

"Can't you pull both your legs out together?" asked Teddy, as he lay on the top of the grassy bank and looked down at his sister.

"Nope! I can't pull both my legs out at once," she answered. " 'Cause if I did I'd fall down."

"Well, then I guess I've got to come down and get you," said Teddy, as he thought about the matter. "You stay there, Janet, and I'll come down and pull you out. I'll hold you so you can pull both your legs out at the same time."

He started to get up, but his sister called to him.

"No, don't come down here, Teddy!"

"Why not?" he asked, in surprise.

" 'Cause if you do, you'll be stuck, too, and then we'll both be stuck in this sticky mud, and we can't get out, and nobody will

know we're here, and nobody can take Trouble home, and——"

"That's so—I forgot about Trouble," said Teddy. "And that is pretty sticky mud, isn't it, Jan?"

"It's terribly sticky!" answered the little girl. "It's just like that time when I sat down in the fly paper. I guess you better go and get mother or daddy or Uncle Ben. They can get me out."

"Wait! Maybe I can do it myself!" said Teddy, after a bit. "If I had a rope I could throw it to you, and you could take hold of it and I could stand up here, where there isn't any mud, and pull you out."

"Yes, but you haven't any rope," said Janet.

Teddy thought some more.

"No, there isn't any rope," he said. "But if I could find a piece of wild grapevine, that would be as good as a rope. Don't you 'member, when we went to Grandpa's Cherry Farm, how we swung on a wild grapevine in the woods, just like a swing?"

"I 'member," Janet answered. "Please go and get me a wild grapevine rope, Teddy, and pull me out. My shoes are all full of mud."

"Yes, and there's a lot on your legs, too," her brother said. "Well, I'll see if I can find a grapevine. If I can't, I'll get daddy or Uncle Ben—they'll pull you out, anyhow."

"Where's Trouble?" asked Janet, as her brother stood up and started to walk away.

"That's so—mustn't forget him," answered Teddy. "He was picking ferns when I heard you yell, but I don't see him now."

"Oh, you must find him!" cried Janet. "If he goes away by himself maybe he'll fall into a mud hole too."

"I'll find Trouble first, and then I'll go and get the grapevine and pull you out," decided the little boy. Of course it might have been better if he had run at once and told his father or his mother what had happened to Janet. But Teddy liked to do things for himself, and if he could help his sister out of the bog he wanted to do it.

"Hi, Trouble! where are you?" cried Teddy as he looked toward the spot where he had left his little brother, picking ferns.

At first there was no answer, and, for a moment, Teddy feared that Baby William had wandered away and become lost, or perhaps had fallen into some swamp hole. But,

in a few seconds, after he had called again, Teddy heard some baby laughter.

"Trouble, are you hiding away from me in the grass?" asked Teddy, for sometimes the little chap did this. "Are you hiding?" asked Teddy in louder tones.

"No, I'se playin'!" was the answer. "I got nudder turkle!"

"You have?" cried Teddy, running toward the spot from which Trouble's voice sounded. "Say, you're great on finding turtles! Yes, you have found one!" he went on, when he reached Baby William's side. He saw the little boy sitting down in a grassy hollow, and near him, slowly crawling, was a mud turtle—much larger than the one Trouble had found that morning and put in Teddy's cot.

"Oh, that's dandy!" cried Ted. "We'll keep 'em both, and maybe we can get up a show with 'em. Come on, Trouble. Jan's stuck in the mud, and I've got to get her out. I've got to find a wild grapevine."

"Jan in mud?" asked Trouble, looking up into Ted's face.

"Yes, she's away down in a deep mud hole. We've got to pull her out."

Carrying the turtle in one hand, with the

other Teddy led Trouble to the edge of the grassy bank, where the little fellow could look down and see his sister stuck in the mud.

"Oh! Too bad!" said Trouble, in a gentle voice, as he saw the plight of poor Janet.

"Yes, it is too bad," agreed the little girl. "I didn't see the mud hole when I went to get the blue flowers."

She still held a bouquet of them in her hand.

"Now you stay here with Janet, Trouble, and I'll go and get a grapevine for a rope," said Teddy. "Sit right here and don't go away."

"I won't," promised Baby William. "I give turtle grass for hims to eat breakshust!"

"Yes, you can feed the turtle his breakfast," agreed Janet. "And don't be too long, Teddy," she begged. " 'Cause I think I'm sinking farther in all the while."

"I'll come right back," he promised, as he ran toward the tangled woodland where he thought some grapevines might grow. And Teddy was lucky enough to find some, so that, in a little while, he came back with one trailing after him.

"Now I'll pull you out, Janet!" he cried. "This is as good as a rope."

He stripped the leaves and little branches from the long, thin vine, which is really a rope of the woods, and then, holding one end, Ted tossed the other to his sister, who was standing below him in the bog. She caught it with one hand, holding the blue flowers in the other.

"Hold fast now, I'm going to pull!" cried Teddy. "I'll pull and you wiggle your feet, and then they'll come loose out of the mud and you can walk over where it's hard ground."

Well, Teddy pulled and Janet tried to keep hold of her end of the grapevine rope, but as Teddy was stronger than she was, and as he was pulling with two hands, while she was holding with only one, and as the mud was very sticky, you can imagine what happened.

Teddy pulled the grapevine away from his sister, and she nearly fell over backward into the muddy puddle just behind her.

"You must take hold with both hands!" cried Teddy, as he, too, almost toppled over. "Take hold with both hands, and I'll pull with both hands, and I'll get you out."

"I've got only one hand," declared Janet. "I must hold on to my flowers."

"Oh, let the flowers go!" ordered Teddy.

"No, I want 'em!" insisted Janet.

"Then I can't pull you out," was Teddy's reply.

Janet thought this over for a moment, and then she said:

"Well, I can throw my flowers to you up there on the bank. You can give 'em to Trouble to keep, and then I can take hold with both hands."

"Yes, you can do that!" agreed Teddy. "Go ahead! Throw me your flowers. I'll give 'em to Trouble."

"But don't let the mud turtle eat 'em!" pleaded Janet, as she tossed the pretty bouquet to her brother. The gathering of the blue flowers had gotten Janet into a lot of trouble.

"My turkle eats grass—hims don't like flowers!" said Baby William, as Ted laid the blossoms down on the ground beside his little brother.

Janet now had both hands free, and she took a good hold of the grapevine rope. Teddy braced his feet in the grass, and began to pull. Janet pulled also, lifting her feet out of the sticky mud, and, with a queer, sucking sound as she lifted her legs, first the

right and then the left, she soon found herself free of the bog. She stepped out on firm ground, and was soon upon the bank with Ted and Trouble.

"Oh, what an awful lot of mud!" cried Teddy, as he looked at his sister's feet. And well might he say that, for she was covered with muck up to her waist.

"I guess I better wade out in the lake, with my shoes and stockings on, and wash off," said Janet. "I can't get any wetter, but I can get a little cleaner."

"I guess you can," decided Teddy.

He and Trouble (who carried the flowers, while his brother held the turtle) walked to the shore of the lake where the water was shallow. There Janet waded in and splashed around. Of course she got very wet—and with her clothes, shoes and stockings on, too! —but the mud was washed off.

"Where have you children been, and what have you been doing?" cried Mrs. Martin, when the Curlytops and Trouble walked up to the bungalow Sunnyside a little later.

"I've been picking a bouquet for you, Mother," answered Janet, and she held out the blue flowers. "Aren't they pretty?"

"Yes, my dear, they are very nice, and

thank you for them. But did you have to wade in the lake up to your waist after them?"

"Oh, no. I fell in the mud and then I had to wash off," explained Janet.

"And I found annuver mud turkle!" cried Trouble.

Then the children told their mother what had happened.

After dinner, when Janet had been washed again and dried and had had clean clothes put on her, Uncle Ben took the three children out on the lake in a little motor boat. It was great fun for them to go riding about the silvery water, the engine of the boat making a chugging sound which Trouble liked very much.

Silver Lake was so large that Uncle Ben did not have time to take the children all around it.

"Some day," he said, "we'll put up a lunch and go on a regular voyage all around the shores in the big motor boat."

"Shall we get shipwrecked?" asked Ted eagerly.

"I hope not!" laughed Uncle Ben. "I was shipwrecked once, and that was enough. But now we are going to stop here. I have

to get some rowboats your father has bought."

He steered the motor craft up to a little pier about a mile from Sunnyside. To this pier a number of small boats were tied. After some talk with a man Uncle Ben tied to the back of the boat in which the Curly-tops sat five of the rowboats, strung out one after the other, like beads on a string.

"Are we going to take 'em home?" asked Janet.

"Yes," answered Uncle Ben. "Your father needs more boats to hire out at his dock near the picnic grounds, and he bought these. I am going to paint them red, like all his boats."

"May I help paint?" Teddy asked.

"Me too?" cried Janet.

"Well, I'll see about it," promised Uncle Ben. "I'm afraid you would get more paint on your hands and faces than you would on the boats. But maybe I'll let you paint a little with a small brush."

"That'll be fun!" cried both children. "Do let us!"

Off they started once more, hauling the rowboats after them in a long line back of the motor craft. Trouble wanted to climb

back into the nearest rowboat, but they would not let him, of course.

Uncle Ben was steering the big boat, and pulling the smaller ones, in toward the Sunnyside dock when suddenly something jumped from the water with a splatter of drops and seemed to leap over the rowboat nearest the motor boat. Then the shining object fell back into the lake again with a splash.

"What was that?" cried Ted.

"Did somebody throw something?" Janet asked.

"Maybe it was a turtle," said Trouble.

"That was a fish that jumped out of the water and clean over the rowboat," said Uncle Ben. "Fish sometimes leap out of the water that way when they want to catch a bug or a fly that is just above them. But I did not know there were such large fish in Silver Lake. I must bring a hook, line, and pole the next time I come out."

"I'm going to fish, too!" declared Teddy.

"So'm I!" added Janet.

"Yes, we'll get up a fishing party!" agreed Uncle Ben. "Maybe we can catch enough for a meal."

The rowboats were tied up at Daddy Mar-

tin's dock, and for the next few days Uncle Ben was busy painting them. Teddy and Janet were both allowed to use a small brush, and really they did quite well, for they were careful.

The only thing that happened was that once, when Trouble came close to watch him, Teddy splattered some red paint on the face of Trouble's beloved rag doll.

"Oh, Teddy Martin! 'ook what you did!" cried Trouble. "I'm goin' to tell mozzer! My doll's all wed!"

"I didn't mean to," Teddy said, sorry enough about what had happened. "Anyhow it makes his cheeks look nice and red."

Trouble hadn't thought of this.

"It does make him 'ook pittier," he agreed. "I'm glad 'oo did it, Teddy."

The Curlytops had lots of fun at Silver Lake. Gradually the bungalow was put in order, and Nora came to cook and help with the work. Then Mrs. Martin could take long walks in the woods with the children, and they often went out on the lake with Uncle Ben, having many good times on the silvery water.

It was just before supper one evening, and Ted and Janet had come in from sailing with

Uncle Ben. Trouble had not gone, as he was asleep, but now he had awakened, and he was freshly washed and dressed.

"Take Trouble for a little walk down the path, Ted and Jan," their mother said. "But don't go far away, for supper will soon be ready."

"All right," they answered, and soon the two Curlytops were leading their little brother by the hand.

"Let's go down to the ice-house," proposed Teddy. "They're taking cakes of ice out now and we can watch."

The ice-house was one partly owned by Mr. Martin. In the winter, when Silver Lake was frozen, men cut big chunks of ice from it, and packed it away in sawdust in a small house, not far from shore. In the summer the ice was taken out and used to make ice-cream and to cool soda water.

The cakes of ice were so large and heavy that they were lifted from the house and lowered to the ground outside by a rope and pulley. The pulley was up near the roof of the house, and the rope dangled to the ground. The ice was hoisted up just as you may have seen a piano hoisted up to the second or third story of a house. The Curly-

tops used to like to watch the men lift the ice out by the rope and pulley.

"Oh, they're all done!" exclaimed Janet, much disappointed, when she and her two brothers reached the ice-house. "They're all done, and they're gone!"

"But they've left the rope where we can reach it," said Teddy. "Oh, Jan, I know what we can do!" he cried.

"What?" she asked.

"We can make believe Trouble is a cake of ice, and hoist him up by the rope," went on Ted. "Come on—let's do it. Trouble, do you want a ride in the air?"

"Oh, 'ess! Me want wide in air!" said the little fellow eagerly.

"All right! Then you're going to have one!" laughed Ted.

CHAPTER XII

COMPANY IN CAMP

Mrs. Martin was sitting on the front porch of the bungalow. She had just finished writing a letter, which she hoped would bring more happiness and fun to the Curly-tops. Uncle Ben and Daddy Martin were washing themselves, after having been at work among the boats and at the dock. In the house, or bungalow I suppose I had better call it, Nora was finishing the supper preparations.

"Yes, this ought to make Ted and Jan happy," said Mrs. Martin to herself as she sealed the letter she had written. "I'll have Uncle Ben take it to the post-office after supper. They won't miss Skyrocket so much if everything turns out the way I want it to," thought Mrs. Martin.

For Ted and Jan had certainly missed their pet dog very much. Skyrocket had

been with them on nearly all their trips to Cherry Farm, to their uncle's or aunt's, and to other places, and now, since the dog had vanished in such a queer way from the woodshed, the Curlytops had sorrowed for him very much. Even Turnover, the cat, did not make up for Skyrocket. And seeing how much Ted and Janet thought about their missing dog, even when they were having fun on the water with Uncle Ben, Mrs. Martin decided to write the letter she had just finished.

She was getting up from her chair, to go inside the bungalow to see if Nora needed any help about the supper, when, suddenly, the mother of the Curlytops saw a curious sight. This was a glimpse of Baby William being raised up off the ground and swaying to and fro on the end of a rope in front of the ice-house.

For a moment Mrs. Martin could not believe that she really saw this. But when she had brushed her hand over her eyes, to make sure that she was wide awake, she felt certain that what she had seen was real.

"Oh, Trouble! William! Ted! Janet! What are you doing?" cried their mother,

and, dropping her letter, she ran off the porch, calling as loudly as she could:

"Daddy! Uncle Ben! Come quick! The baby is hanging from the end of a rope!"

Mr. Martin and Uncle Ben had just finished washing, and when they heard the call they ran down the path after Mrs. Martin. They, too, saw just what she saw—Trouble dangling from the end of a rope that ran over a pulley, or wooden wheel, near the top of the ice-house. And as the two men watched they saw Baby William slowly go down, and then go up again, just as an elevator goes down and comes up.

"Somebody's hauling Trouble up and down, just like a cake of ice!" cried Daddy Martin.

"That's what they are!" said Uncle Ben. "I wonder who it is?"

The next moment he and Mr. Martin came in sight of the ice-house, and they saw who was doing it. There stood Teddy and Jan, first hauling up on the end of a long rope, and then letting it run through their hands again. On the other end of the rope, as it ran over the pulley wheel at the roof of the ice-house, was Baby William.

The rope was tied about his waist, and

every time the Curlytops pulled on the rope their little brother was hoisted up in the air, swaying and dangling about as a spider does on the end of the web he spins. And when Ted and Jan let the rope slip through their fingers, Trouble was lowered toward the ground.

The Curlytops were quite strong for their age, having played out of doors so much, and Trouble was not very heavy. The rope slipped easily over the wooden wheel, or pulley, and so it was that Ted and Jan could very easily raise and lower their little brother. They had tied the rope around his waist. Ted was pretty good at tying knots, for Uncle Ben had showed him how.

"Children! Children! What are you doing?" cried Mrs. Martin, as, with her husband and Uncle Ben, she came in front of the ice-house.

"Theodore, Janet, stop it at once!" cried their father.

"Lower him easy now! Don't let him come down too hard!" was what Uncle Ben said. And he said it just in time, too. For Ted and Jan were so surprised at being called to in this sudden way that they might have let go of the rope while Trouble was

hoisted in the air, and then the little chap would have had a hard fall.

But Uncle Ben knew what he was doing, and no sooner had he called out than he ran beneath the dangling little boy and caught him in his arms as Ted and Jan lowered him.

"There you are!" cried Uncle Ben, as he loosed the loop of rope from around Trouble's little stomach and set Baby William on the ground.

"Oh, Ted! Jan! What were you doing?" asked their mother. "What were you thinking of?"

"We were just playing Trouble was a cake of ice," said Janet, as she let go her hold of the rope.

"And we gave him a ride up and down in the air," added Teddy.

"Me 'iked it!" declared Trouble himself, as he laughed and clapped his hands. "Me went up and me went down!"

"I should say you did!" said his mother. "It's a mercy you didn't fall. Don't ever do such a thing again, Ted and Jan."

"No'm. We won't!" they promised.

"Anyhow, if he did fall, or the rope broke, he wouldn't have hurt himself much," said Teddy, after thinking the matter over. "The

ground is all sawdust here, and he'd fall on that. Besides we didn't pull him up very high. Did we, Jan?"

"No, not high at all," she agreed.

"And I tied the rope around his stomach good and tight so it wouldn't slip," went on Teddy. "I tied the rope the way you showed me, Uncle Ben."

"Well, I am not going to show you how to tie any more knots if you use a rope on your little brother," said Mr. Wilson.

Teddy thought that over, and decided he wanted to know more about ropes and knots, and as, moreover, their father and mother said the Curlytops must not do it again, that was the first and last time Baby William was ever hauled up on an ice rope by his brother and sister. But the Curlytops did plenty of other queer things, as you shall hear.

Supper over that night, they all went for a sail with Daddy Martin. Silver Lake was getting to be quite a lively place now. The merry-go-round was being put up, after having been stored in a barn all winter, the shoot-the-chutes were being painted and made ready for the picnic crowds, and the other places to have fun would soon be

open. The picnic grounds, as I have told you, were a little distance from Sunnyside Bungalow, but it was easy to reach them in a boat, or by walking around the shore of Silver Lake.

Mr. Martin had his boats all in readiness to be hired out now, and a few persons had come to get them, being waited on by Uncle Ben, who was in charge. Uncle Ben had told Mr. Martin it would be a good idea to put up a little candy and soda-water stand on the pier, so those who went out in boats could buy something to eat and something to drink. So this had been done, and the Curlytops were quite delighted. For, of course, they could have all the soda water and ice-cream they wanted without paying a cent—as their father owned the stand. Mrs. Martin did not let the children have more than was good for them, though.

Every day the Curlytops had fun at Silver Lake, and the fun did not always end at night, for Uncle Ben or Daddy Martin would take them out on the water either in a sailboat a rowboat or in the motor launch.

"When are we going fishing?" asked Teddy one evening, as they were coming back to the dock after a pleasant sail.

"Oh, pretty soon now," said Uncle Ben, with a smile at the Curlytops. For Janet was as eager to start out with hook and line as was Teddy. "I'll have to go soon, if I go at all. For soon the picnic and excursion crowds will be coming to Silver Lake, and I'll be so busy attending to the boats, the soda water and the ice-cream, that I won't have any time to fish."

As I have told you, Uncle Ben was to be in charge of Mr. Martin's dock at the lake, and the old sailor was to have a man and a boy to help him. The man had come, but the boy had not yet been hired. Mr. Martin spent many days at Sunnyside Bungalow, at Silver Lake, as he had some one he could leave in charge of his store at Cresco.

One day, after dinner, Ted had found some string that came off a package of groceries. He took out the knots, fastened one end of the cord on a stick which he found in the woods, and cried:

"Where's Uncle Ben? I want to go fishing now, but I haven't got a hook. Come on, Uncle Ben, let's go fishing!"

Mrs. Martin was reading a letter, and when she finished it she looked at the clock and said:

"I wouldn't go fishing just now, Teddy."

"Why not, Mother?"

"Because I thought perhaps you and Jan would like to go in the motor boat over to the Point to meet the train."

"Go to the Point to meet the train!" cried Ted. "Is anybody we know coming on the train?"

"Yes, I think so," and Mrs. Martin smiled.

"Oh, who is it?" cried Ted and Janet together. For when their mother smiled in that queer way they knew something good was in store for them.

"Well, the other day I wrote a letter, inviting some company to come here to visit us," she said. "Just now I have their answer and they are coming on the eleven-o'clock train. Uncle Ben is going over to the Point to meet it, and I thought you would like to go with him. But if you would rather go fishing——"

"Oh, no!" cried Ted. "We want to see the company; don't we, Jan?"

"Yes! Who is it?"

"See if you can't guess. I'm not going to tell you," said Mrs. Martin with a laugh.

Well, the Curlytops guessed. Grandpa Martin? Uncle Frank? Aunt Jo? But

their mother only shook her head after each guess.

"You'll have to wait and see," she told them.

So you can well imagine how excited Ted and Janet were when they got ready to go over to the Point in the motor boat with Uncle Ben to meet the company that was to come to camp. The Point was the nearest railroad station for Silver Lake, and it was on the other side of the sparkling water from where Sunnyside Bungalow was built.

"Do you know who is coming, Uncle Ben?" asked Ted, as he and his sister took their seats in the launch.

"Oh, please tell us!" begged Jan. "That is, if it isn't a secret and you didn't promise not to tell."

"Well, it's a secret. But I didn't promise not to tell, for your mother didn't tell me who was coming," said Uncle Ben. "She just said I was to take the boat, go over to the Point, meet the train and bring the company back to camp."

"But how are you going to know who to bring if you don't know who is coming?" asked Ted.

"Oh, your mother said you'd know who it

was as soon as you saw them," said Uncle Ben, with a smile.

And Ted and Janet did. For no sooner did the train puff into the station and the passengers begin to get off than the Curlytops spied a boy and a girl of about their own ages.

"There's Tom Taylor!" cried Ted.

"And Lola, his sister, too!" fairly shouted Janet. "Oh, they're our company!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" yelled Ted and Janet.

Tom and Lola, seeing their playmates, whose mother had invited them to spend part of their vacation at Silver Lake, rushed down the depot platform.

"Oh, won't we have fun!" cried Ted, capering about Tom.

"Oh, won't we!" agreed Tom, dancing up and down. "And Ted, I've got a secret!"

"You have? What is it?"

"I know where your dog Skyrocket is!"

CHAPTER XIII

CATCHING FISH

WHAT Tom told Teddy as the two boys danced around on the railroad station platform was the second surprise of the day for the Curlytops. The first was in seeing the two Taylor children who had come to visit them at Sunnyside. And the second was when Tom said:

"I know where Skyrocket is!"

Of course that was enough to make Ted and Janet open their eyes very wide and look closely at their little friend.

"Did you bring Skyrocket with you?" asked Janet eagerly.

"Oh, no. I couldn't do that," explained Tom. "Anyhow, a man had him. He was a gypsy man, and he had Skyrocket in a red wagon with a lot of looking-glass on the outside. I mean the wagon had looking-glass on the outside—not Skyrocket."

"I know that!" cried Ted. "I've seen gypsy wagons before. But go on! Tell me about Skyrocket! Where is he?"

But Uncle Ben stepped up just then and asked:

"Are you two little visitors all alone? Did any one come with you? Shall I look for your father or mother in the crowd?" For there was quite a crowd of people who got off the train at the Point, and many of them had come either on an excursion or to spend a vacation at Silver Lake.

"We came all alone," explained Tom. "The conductor took care of my sister and me. We got here all right."

"And they know where Skyrocket is!" cried Ted.

"Is that so?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Well, I don't zactly know where he is now," said Tom Taylor. "But I saw him, and so did Lola."

"Yes, we saw him in a gypsy wagon," added Tom's sister.

"Tell us all about it!" begged Janet, very much excited.

"Not now," said Uncle Ben. "We had better get back to Sunnyside. Mrs. Martin will want to know that you two youngsters

arrived safely. You can talk about Skyrocket on the way home in the boat. But I had better see the conductor and tell him I have his two little travelers safe. Just wait here for me."

The two Curlytops and their friends were so excited and glad to see each other that they could not possibly stand still. They danced around in circles, they looked at one another, and they talked so fast and had so much to say to one another that it is a wonder they ever finished.

Uncle Ben soon came back, saying he had seen the conductor, who was glad to know that Tom and Lola had met their friends from Silver Lake. The train journey from Cresco was not a long one, and children often traveled in the care of the train conductors, when their fathers or mothers had no time to go along.

"Oh, we'll have packs of fun!" cried Ted to Tom, as they started for the gasolene launch. "We have a bungalow, and a tent, and lots of boats and there's a merry-go-round and a shoot-the-chutes, and——"

"And we're going fishing," broke in Jan. "And Uncle Ben is going to show me how to sail a boat, and I got stuck in the mud and

we played Trouble was a cake of ice and—and—everything!"

She had to stop then, she was so out of breath.

"Oh, say, that's great!" cried Tom. "Your mother was awful good to ask us to come out and have a vacation here."

"And we didn't know a thing about it till we saw you get off the train," said Teddy. "And now tell us about Skyrocket."

"Oh, yes! Where is he?" asked the little Curlytop girl.

"Well, I don't know where he is now," Tom said. "We saw him just when we were at the station in Cresco waiting for the train. A gypsy wagon came along—all looking-glass and painted red, you know—and I heard a bark inside, a dog's bark."

"I heard it, too," said Lola, "and I said it sounded just like your dog Skyrocket."

"Yes, she said that," agreed Tom. "And then we were going to run out to the wagon to see, and, all of a sudden, a dog stuck his head out the back door and it was Skyrocket!"

"Are you sure?" asked Uncle Ben, as he steered the boat out into the open lake, and pointed the bow toward Sunnyside. "There

are lots of dogs that may look like Skyrocket, you know."

"This was Skyrocket all right!" declared Tom. "I whistled to him and called his name."

"And he wagged his tail, just like Skyrocket used to," declared Lola. "And then Tom and I were going to run after the wagon and get your dog for you, but then our train came and we had to get on."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janet. "Then the gypsy has our dog."

"Well, I told Mr. Whitter, the station agent, about it," said Tom. "He said he'd try to find out where the Gypsy wagon was going, and then he'd let you know."

"Do the gypsies ever camp near Cresco?" asked Uncle Ben.

"They used to," said Tom. "They sold horses and the gypsy women told fortunes and they had a lot of dogs."

"Well, it might be that your Skyrocket was taken from the woodshed that night by a prowling gypsy," said Uncle Ben. "You can have your father write to Mr. Whitter, Ted, and ask if the gypsies are camping near Cresco this year. If they are we'll go there and see if they have Skyrocket."

"I hope they'll be good to him," murmured Janet.

"I wish he had jumped out of the gypsy wagon when you saw him," said Ted.

"So do I!" agreed Tom. "If he had, Lola and I could 'a' brought him along with us in the train."

"Did they catch the burglars that got in Miss Ransom's store?" asked Teddy, when the boat was nearing the bungalow dock. "And did she ever get back the funny box with the secret drawer?"

"No, I don't b'lieve she ever did," said Tom. "Anyhow, I didn't hear anything about that. I've just been thinking about coming out here to see you and Jan and have fun."

A little later the motor boat stopped at the pier in front of the Sunnyside bungalow, and Tom and Lola were being made welcome by Mrs. Martin and Nora. Daddy Martin had gone to town to see about ordering some things for his soda-water stand.

"Isn't this great?" cried Ted to Tom, when the two boys had a chance to roam about the woods near the bungalow.

"It's just dandy!" cried Tom. "I could live here forever!"

"We'll get our dolls and take them for a walk in the woods," said Janet to Lola. "You brought a doll, didn't you?"

"Yes, I brought my three best ones."

"Oh, then we can have a lovely time, and play parties and all like that. What is it, Trouble?" Janet asked, for Baby William was pulling at her dress.

"I want some, too!" he exclaimed.

"Some what?" asked Janet.

"Trouble want 'ovey time!" he answered.

"Well, you come with Janet and I'll get you a sugar cookie," said his sister. "Then you can have a lovely time eating it."

He was soon satisfied with a cookie his mother gave him, and a little lunch was also set out for Tom and Lola. And of course Ted and Jan had to have some, too. So there was a lovely, jolly time almost as soon as the visitors reached Sunnyside.

"Now get on your old clothes," said Ted to Tom, after they had finished the simple meal, "and we'll go off into the woods and have a lot of fun."

"But be careful!" cautioned Mrs. Martin. "Don't go in the boats unless Uncle Ben is with you, don't fall in the mud, don't play that Trouble is a cake of ice and——

Dear me!" she exclaimed to Nora, "there are so many things to tell the children *not* to do that I can't remember half of them."

"We'll be good!" promised Ted.

Soon he and his boy chum were roaming about in the woods and over to the picnic grounds, which would soon be open to parties from Cresco and other villages and cities. Lola and Janet got out their dolls, and had a play party. Trouble played about in a pile of white sand that Uncle Ben had put in front of the bungalow in a shady spot for the little fellow. So all the boys and girls were having a good time.

During the next two days everything opened at Silver Lake. The merry-go-round started with its organ that played the same tunes over and over again, the shoot-the-chutes and the roller coaster were in operation, and then the excursion parties and picnics arrived. Sometimes the Curlytops, with Tom and Lola, went over to the picnic grounds, but more often they played around Sunnyside, or went out in the boat with Uncle Ben or Mr. Martin.

With the coming of the picnic parties Uncle Ben was kept busy, as were his two helpers—a man and a boy—in hiring out

boats, attending the ice-cream and soda-water stand, and in doing other things. But still Uncle Ben had time to take the Curly-tops and their two little friends for many a sail, row, or trip in the motor boat. He also went with them on little journeys back into the woods. Sometimes Trouble was taken along.

Tom told Mr. Martin about having seen a dog that looked exactly like Skyrocket in the Gypsy wagon, and Ted's father wrote to Mr. Whitter, the station agent, asking him to find out if any of the queer folk, who lived in red wagons, with looking-glasses on the sides, were camping near Cresco.

One day, when no picnic parties were expected, and when Uncle Ben was not going to be very busy, he said:

"How would you like some fish to-morrow, Mrs. Martin?"

"I'd like them very much," answered the mother of the Curlytops. "Do you think you could catch any in Silver Lake?"

"I might try," answered Uncle Ben, with a funny wink of one eye. "But I think I'd need some help. There are pretty big fish in the lake, and perhaps I couldn't pull one out all alone."

"Oh, let me come!" cried Ted, who heard what was being said.

"Can't I go?" shouted Tom.

"I want to fish!" added Janet, while Lola looked up from the floor where she and Jan were playing jackstones.

"Well, I guess we can get up a regular fishing party," said Uncle Ben, with a laugh. "What do you say, Mrs. Martin; shall I take the Curlytops fishing?"

"You might," was the answer. "If you bring home enough I'll have Nora cook them for dinner."

"Oh, goodie! We're going fishing!" cried Ted.

"I hope I get a big one!" sang out Tom.

"I never caught a fish," confessed Lola.

"It's fun," said Janet, who had often gone fishing with her father and brother.

A little later the four children were out in the motor boat with Uncle Ben, ready for fishing. Trouble had been left on shore with his mother, as it was thought that he would be in the way.

"Now we'll anchor the boat here," said Uncle Ben, when they had gone about halfway across Silver Lake. "I think this will be a good place to catch fish."

So the anchor—which in itself was like a big fish-hook, only with two sharp points to it instead of one—was thrown overboard, being made fast to a rope that was tied to the motor boat. The anchor kept the boat from drifting away.

Soon Uncle Ben had baited four hooks for the children and tossed them over the side. Then he baited his own and they were all ready to catch fish.

"How are you going to tell when you get one?" asked Lola.

"Oh, you'll feel something pulling on the line," said her brother. "But you must keep still, Lola! Fish don't like to hear you talk."

"Don't they?" asked the little girl. "Our parrot likes to hear me talk."

"Well, a parrot isn't a fish," went on Tom. "You must keep still. Mustn't she, Uncle Ben?"

"It isn't good to make too much noise when you're fishing," was the answer, "though if you talk in low voices it doesn't so much matter. Now let's see who'll catch the first fish."

For a time no one spoke. The Curlytops and their two little guests eagerly watched

their lines, and, now and again, one or another of the children would pull theirs up to see if they had a fish.

"Don't pull up until you feel a good nibble," said Uncle Ben.

There was another wait, and then suddenly Tom whispered:

"I have a big bite!"

The next instant Ted called:

"Oh, so have I!"

Tom was fishing from the left side of the boat, and Ted from the right. As they raised their poles Lola and Janet saw that both lines were stretched tight.

"Oh, they're big fish!" exclaimed Janet.

"Pull up! Pull up!" called Uncle Ben. "Land your fishes, boys!"

Tom pulled and so did Ted. Their poles bent with the strain, but neither one could seem to get the fish he had caught into the boat.

"They must be regular whales!" cried Ted.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GROWLERY HOLE

"PULL in! Pull in!" called Uncle Ben from where he was sitting in the stern, or back end of the boat. "Pull in your fish, boys!"

"I'm trying to!" answered Teddy.

"So'm I," called Tom.

Harder and harder they pulled. Their poles bent more and more, and their fishing lines were now straight up and down in the water.

Suddenly Tom turned to look at Ted, who was back of him on the other side of the boat.

"Hey there! Look out, Ted!" called Tom. "Your line is all tangled up with mine!"

"And so is your line tangled with mine!" added Ted. "That's why I can't get my fish in!"

Both little boys had turned and were

looking at one another. All of a sudden Uncle Ben began to laugh.

"What's the matter?" asked Ted, who was red in the face from pulling so hard on his pole.

"Somebody's got to help me get my fish!" exclaimed Tom.

"Neither one of you has a fish," said Uncle Ben, with another laugh. "Your hooks and lines tangled together under the boat and you have been pulling one against the other. Ted was pulling on Tom's line and Tom was pulling on Ted's line. Take it easy, now, and I'll untangle your lines."

The two little boys looked at one another and then at Uncle Ben. Then they laughed, and so did Lola and Janet.

As Ted and Tom lowered their poles their lines were no longer stretched tight. Then Uncle Ben pulled on Tom's line and drew it from the water beneath the motor boat. And just as he had said, Tom's hook was caught in Ted's line. The two cords were snarled together, and it was no wonder each lad felt that he had a big fish when, the truth was, he was only pulling against his friend on the other side of the boat.

"There! Now you're all right once more,

and you can throw in again," said Uncle Ben, when he had finished the untangling. "Better move a little farther apart. Ted, you come back here to the stern, and Tom, you go forward to the bow. Then your lines won't be so likely to get crossed under the boat."

As the two boys started to separate Lola gave a cry.

"I've got a fish! I've got a fish!" she shouted.

There was no doubt but she had. Something under the water was fast to the hook on her line and was darting to and fro, making the cord cut through the little waves.

"Pull in! Pull in!" cried Uncle Ben.

"Oh, oh!" shrieked Lola, and she pulled and she pushed, but most of all she waved her pole in the air—she was so excited, you see—and she was just about to drop her pole, when her brother grabbed it.

"You'll lose your fish if you don't pull it in!" he exclaimed.

"All right, you do it!" gasped his sister. And Tom was very ready to do this.

With a quick jerk of the pole he raised it in the air. The line came up with it, and there, dangling from the hook, and squirm-

ing about in the sun, the water dripping from it, was rather a large fish.

"Oh, I caught the first one! I caught the first one! I did!" cried Lola, clapping her hands.

"Yes, but I had to help you!" said Tom, as he landed the fish in the bottom of the boat, where it flapped about.

"Well, we both caught it, then," said Lola, with a laugh. "We can write and tell mother we each caught half a fish."

"Next time you get a bite pull it in yourself, and then you'll catch a whole fish," said Uncle Ben. "Look!" And with that Uncle Ben showed the little girl how she should handle the rod when trying to land a fish.

After the excitement of the first catch had quieted down, the boys and girls threw in their baited hooks again, and Ted caught the next fish. It was not quite as large as Lola's, but it was a good fish, Uncle Ben said. Then Janet caught one, and pulled it in herself.

Soon after that Lola felt a nibble. This time she pulled up quickly, and she had a fish herself—almost as big as the first one she had caught.

"Now I got one all myself!" she cried. "Didn't I, Uncle Ben?"

"Yes, you landed that one all alone—no more half fish for you!" agreed the old sailor.

The fishing in Silver Lake was very good, and it was not long before every one had made a catch, including Uncle Ben. When there were half a dozen or more fish in the "cage," as Ted called the water-filled space made for keeping the catch fresh, Uncle Ben said:

"We have enough now. No use to take more fish than you need. Save some for the next time."

Then they had a nice ride around Silver Lake and got back to Sunnyside in time for supper. Daddy Martin was there, waiting for them, and he laughed when Tom and Ted told him how Tom and he each thought they had a big fish, when, really, they had only caught each other's lines.

But they all had had a good time, and they said they were going fishing again with Uncle Ben. Many were the happy days at Silver Lake and at the Sunnyside Bungalow.

One morning when the Curlytops and Tom

and Lola came in to breakfast at the call of Nora Mrs. Martin said:

"Don't go away when you have finished eating, my dears. I want you to stay around the house."

"Why?" asked Ted. "May Tom and I go off into the woods? We heard a dog barking there last night, and maybe it was Skyrocket. Maybe he got away from the Gypsies, and has come to find me."

"Well, I hope he does," said Mrs. Martin. "I heard that dog barking, too, but it wasn't Skyrocket. But the reason I don't want you to go away is that we are going off into the woods for a little picnic, and I don't want to have to look all over for you when I am ready."

"Oh, are we going on a really truly picnic?" cried Janet.

"With things to eat?" asked Ted.

"I don't believe it would be much of a picnic without things to eat," said his mother, with a laugh. "Yes, it's going to be a truly real one. So don't go too far away!"

"I guess not!" exclaimed Tom, with a laugh. "I like picnics!"

"Specially the kind where you have things to eat!" added Ted.

"That's the only kind of a picnic worth going on," added Uncle Ben.

"Are you coming?" asked Janet. Both she and her brother had grown very fond of Uncle Ben, and Tom and Lola liked him very much, too.

"Uncle Ben is going to take us across the lake in the motor boat, leave us there, and come for us later this afternoon," explained Mrs. Martin. "He is so busy at the boat dock that he can't get off this time. But he'll come on the next picnic. Now run out and play. I'll call you when Nora and I have put up the lunch."

And a little later Mrs. Martin called:

"Come on now, children! All ready for the picnic!"

Down the hill they raced to the boat dock, where Uncle Ben was waiting for them in the motor launch. Nora carried down the baskets of lunch, and soon the little party was on its way across Silver Lake to the picnic grounds.

Of course there were plenty of picnic places on the same side of the lake as Sunnyside Bungalow, but Mrs. Martin thought it would be more fun to take a little trip and find a new place. You can often have plenty

of fun in your own yard, but, sometimes, it's more fun to go to your chum's.

Over the shining waters chugged the motor boat, and in a little while it turned into a shady cove. Up from the shore was a grove of trees, and when Uncle Ben had landed with the children and Mrs. Martin, and had found a spring of water, it was decided to eat the lunch there.

"But we won't eat right away," said Mother Martin. "Run about and play, children, and when it's time to eat I'll call you, but don't go too far off."

They promised that they would not, and when Uncle Ben had set the baskets and boxes out of the boat he started back across the lake again, promising to come at the close of the day to take them all back.

Mrs. Martin had brought along a book to read, and, finding a shady spot under the trees, she sat down on a blanket, while Ted, Janet, Tom and Lola, with Trouble, walked around looking at the different things to see. The two girls had each brought a doll, Trouble had his rag doll and a big red rubber ball, which he liked to toss about, and then run after. Ted and Tom had not brought anything with which to play, as they

said they wanted to pretend they were boy scouts and look for things in the woods.

It was when Trouble gave his red rubber ball an extra hard throw that Tom and Ted discovered something. Baby William came up to his brother, after having lost his ball, and began to tell all about it.

"Trouble's ball gone!" he said.

"Well, where has it gone to, Trouble?" asked Ted.

"Me show!" was the answer. "Down hole. You get hims for me!"

"He's thrown his rubber ball down a hole, Tom," said Ted to his chum, who was following a bird through the woods, trying to see where she had made her nest. "I'll get it for him, and then we'll see if we can find the eggs. But we won't take any."

"No, we won't take any," agreed Tom.

"Now come on, Trouble, show me where you threw the red ball, and I'll get it for you," said Ted.

"All wite! Me show!" was the answer, and Baby William put his little hand into his brother's. Down one of the woodland paths Trouble led his brother, and at last he stopped where a round, black hole showed just under the edge of an overhanging stone.

"Trouble's ball down there!" said the little fellow.

"All right! I'll get it up for you," offered Ted. He stretched out on the ground, and reached his arm down into the hole, thinking he could easily touch the bottom, and bring up the red ball. But Ted's hand was only half way down the hole, and his fingers had not felt the soft rubber ball when he heard a growl from inside the hole.

"Oh! Oh!" cried Ted, jumping up in a hurry. "There's something down in that hole besides your rubber ball, Trouble!"

"Yes, Trouble's ball down there!" said the little fellow. "You get hims."

"But there's a wild animal down there—a bear or a wolf, maybe!" said Teddy. "I'm not going to put my hand down again!"

"What's the matter?" asked Tom, coming along the path just then. He had given up trying to find the bird's nest.

"Oh, Trouble's ball rolled down a hole, and when I stuck my hand in to get it something growled at me!" exclaimed Ted.

"I wish I could hear him," said Tom.

"You can hear him if you stick your hand down the hole," explained Ted.

"Huh! Think I'm going to get bit?" cried

his chum. "I guess not! But I know how I can make it growl without that."

"How?" asked Ted.

"Poke a stick down. That'll do it!"

"Oh, yes! Let's!" cried the Curlytop lad.

They hunted about until they found a long, smooth stick and, standing on the edge of the hole down which Trouble had said his ball had rolled, Tom poked in the branch.

Instantly there was a growl and several queer little barks.

The two boys looked at one another.

"Did you hear that?" cried Tom.

"I should say I did!" agreed Ted.

"It's your dog Skyrocket," went on Tom. "The Gypsy man must have let him go, and he came here. Then he hid in the hole so the Gypsies couldn't find him again."

"Oh, maybe he did!" cried Teddy. "Come on out, Skyrocket! Come on out!" he called.

There was no answer from the hole.

"Let me poke the stick in," begged Ted, taking the branch from Tom.

"All right. But poke it easy, so's not to hurt Skyrocket!"

"I will."

Ted thrust in the stick. Once more there

was a growl, followed by a number of tiny barks, like those of a dog.

"That isn't Skyrocket," decided Ted, when his pet did not come out after being called again and again.

"What is it then?" asked Tom.

"I don't know," admitted his chum. "We'd better go and tell my mother. Come on, Trouble!"

"Trouble want wed ball!" cried the little fellow.

"I know you do," answered his brother. "But it's down in the hole, and something always growls at us. I don't want to get bit, and Tom doesn't either. I guess we'll have to wait till Uncle Ben comes back. He'll get the ball for you, Trouble."

"All wite!" was the answer.

Then Ted and Tom ran to where Mrs. Martin was sitting in the shade and the boys cried:

"Trouble's red ball is in the growlery hole, and we can't get it out!"

CHAPTER XV

A BIG WHITE BIRD

Mrs. Martin looked up, smiling at the three children. She was thinking of setting out the lunch which had been brought along, and perhaps her mind was so much on this, wondering whether there would be enough for five hungry children, that, at first, she did not know just what Tom and Ted were saying.

"Come on, Mother!" cried Ted to her. "You come and see what it is!"

"Where shall I come?" she asked, getting up, as Ted tugged at her hand to help her to her feet.

"Come to the growlery hole," begged Tom.

"And me want my wed ball!" cried Trouble.

"Is this some game you are playing?" asked Mrs. Martin, looking first at one and

then the other. "Have you taken Trouble's ball and hidden it, Teddy?"

"Oh, no'm!" answered the little Curlytop boy. "Trouble threw his ball down a hole. Tom and I tried to get it out for him, but every time we poke our hands or a stick in a growl comes out of the hole."

"What comes out?" asked Mrs. Martin in surprise.

"A growl!" answered Tom. "It's a growl, like a dog, and that's why we call it the growlery hole."

"Maybe it's Skyrocket, Mother!" suggested Ted. "Please come and see."

"Oh, it couldn't be Skyrocket," said Mrs. Martin. "If your dog were in a hole he'd come out as soon as you called him. Besides, how would Skyrocket get here?"

"He might get away from the Gypsies," answered Ted. "Anyhow, Mother, come and see what's in the growlery hole, please!"

"Very well, I'll come," said his mother. "But it's probably only a little squirrel or chipmunk that thinks you're trying to hurt it."

"Does a squirrel or a chipmunk growl?" asked Tom.

"Well, I don't know that they exactly

growl," answered Mrs. Martin, "but they make funny noises. However, we'll go see what it is."

As she was starting back with the three boys to the place that Ted and Tom called the growlery hole, Jan and Lola came over the top of a little hill.

"Where are you going, Mother?" asked Jan. "Is it time to eat?"

"Not quite," answered the Curlytops' mother. "But it will be soon. I am going with the boys to look at a growlery hole. Do you want to come, Jan and Lola?"

"Is a growlery hole nice?" asked Janet.

"I don't know—I never saw one," Mrs. Martin answered with a smile. "Tell them about it, Ted."

Which Ted and Tom did, in quite excited voices, you may be sure.

"Is it very loud growls that come out?" asked Ted's sister.

"If they're as loud as thunder I don't want to see them!" declared Lola.

"You can't *see* growls, you *hear* 'em!" exclaimed Tom.

"Well, we'll go, anyway, and see *and* hear," said Janet.

So Lola and Janet went with Mrs. Mar-

tin, Trouble, Ted, and Tom to the "growlery hole."

"There it is!" cried Tom, after a little walk. "There's the growlery hole!"

"Yes, there it is!" added Ted.

They pointed to a small hole under the overhanging ledge of a rock.

"My wed ball down there!" said Trouble. "Me want wed ball!"

"All right. Mother will see if she can get it for you," promised Mrs. Martin with a smile. "But first I want to hear the growl."

"Just poke a stick down, or your hand, and you'll hear it," said Tom.

"I think I'd better put a stick down first," answered Mrs. Martin. "If there is some animal there—and there seems to be from what you boys say—he might bite me. A stick will be safer."

And when she thrust down the same stick that Tom and Ted had used, surely enough there sounded first a growl and then a queer little barking noise.

"Oh, is it Skyrocket?" cried Janet.

"No, I think not," answered her mother. "It doesn't sound at all like our little dog. But there's some animal there, that's sure, and I don't believe that it is quite as harm-

less as a squirrel or a rabbit. I'll tell you what we'll do."

"What?" cried the four larger children in a chorus.

"We'll wait until Uncle Ben comes," was the answer. "He knows a lot about the woods and about animals."

"Uncle Ben get my wed ball?" asked Trouble.

"Yes, we'll have Uncle Ben get your red ball if he can," his mother told him. "And now we might as well go back and have our lunch."

"But maybe the bear in the growlery hole will take Trouble's red ball while we're gone," said Teddy.

"It isn't a bear in there—that's sure," answered Mrs. Martin. "There are no bears around here."

They all went back to the little grassy hill under the shade of the trees, and near the spring of clear, cold, bubbling water. There Mrs. Martin set out the lunch on a big flat stump for a table, and the children sat down on the ground to eat it.

"Oh! Ah! Um!" murmured Teddy and Janet when they saw their mother set out some jam tarts on a little wooden plate.

"You may pass them, Janet," said her mother, and Janet, very politely, passed the jam tarts first to Lola, she being company, and next to Tom, he being company also.

"Me want jam tart!" cried Trouble, reaching across the stump-table.

"Yes, you shall have one, dear," said Janet, and she passed the plate to him next, at the same time smiling at Tom and Ted. They understood what this meant—that Ted would have to wait until his little brother had been served. Then came Ted's turn, and next Janet offered the plate to her mother.

"Help yourself, dear," said Mrs. Martin. "I am not very hungry."

But the Curlytops were, and so were Trouble and Tom and Lola. And I wish you could have seen them all eat! No, on second thought, I don't wish that. It would have made you so hungry that you would go right out to the kitchen, I'm sure, and ask whoever was there to make some jam tarts. And there might just happen to be no jam, you know.

So we'll pass over that part and I'll tell you what happened next. Lola was eating a second jam tart, and had just taken one bite from it, when Janet asked her to pass the sugar. Lola put her tart down on a plate

at her side to reach for the sugar bowl, and when she turned again to take up her piece of pastry it was gone.

"Tom Taylor!" she exclaimed, looking sharply at her brother, who sat next to her, "did you take my jam tart?"

"Why no, I didn't take it," he answered.

"You're eating one!" exclaimed Lola.

"This is my own!" Tom declared. "Ted passed it to me; didn't you, Ted?"

"Yes, I gave it to you," was the answer.

"Well, somebody took mine!" cried Lola. "I put it down to hand Jan the sugar, and now it's gone!"

"I think I can show you who took it, Lola, my dear," said Mrs. Martin, in a low voice.

"Who?" asked the little girl.

"Look over there, on that little stump," was the whispered answer. "There is the little chap who took it."

Lola and the others looked, and saw a pretty striped chipmunk, a little animal something like a squirrel. The chipmunk was sitting up on the flat stump, and, held in its paws, was the missing jam tart. Mr. Chipmunk was eating away as fast as he could at Lola's tart, and he seemed to like it. He didn't mind in the least that she had

taken a bite out of it. Though of course I suppose he would rather have had a whole one.

"There is the burglar who took your tart, Lola!" said Mrs. Martin.

"Oh, did he come up here when I wasn't looking and take it?" asked the little girl who was visiting the Curlytops.

"That's just what he did. The chipmunks in these woods are very tame," said Mrs. Martin. "I have heard campers say they would sometimes jump up on the table and take pieces of bread. The little animals are so pretty and harmless that no one hurts them, so they grow bolder and bolder. Next time put your jam tart down in front of you, and then you can shoo the chipmunk away if he comes after it."

"Maybe I won't have any more jam tarts," said Lola.

"Oh, yes, I have some more in another box," answered Mrs. Martin, with a laugh. "But watch out for chipmunks!"

And they did, after that. They watched the one that had taken Lola's tart as it sat on the stump eating it until Trouble laughed so hard at the queer motions of the striped animal that Mr. Chipmunk seemed not to like

it, and away he scampered, carrying what was left of the tart with him.

There was no other accident to the rest of the picnic lunch, except that a lot of ants crawled on a piece of bread and sugar that Trouble laid down for a moment, and some bees buzzed around when Mrs. Martin brought out a can of peaches. But the bees stung no one, and Trouble said the ants could have his bread.

The dishes were put away—there was no lunch itself left, you may be sure—and when the crumbs had been brushed into a little pile for the birds, and the scattered papers piled under a rock so they would not blow about and make the woods untidy, Ted looked down toward Silver Lake and cried:

"Here comes Uncle Ben!"

"Yes, that's our boat," said Mrs. Martin, shading her eyes from the sun and peering toward the boat at which Ted pointed.

"Now we'll find out what's in the growlery hole!" exclaimed Tom.

Uncle Ben was almost knocked down by the rush of four eager children at him when he reached the shore, all crying:

"Uncle Ben! Uncle Ben!"

"What's the matter?" he asked, when he

had made the motor boat fast to shore. "Did you think I wasn't coming?"

"Oh, no. But we want you to see what's in the growlery hole!" cried Ted.

Then they told Uncle Ben what they meant, and when Mrs. Martin had nodded, to show that there was really something in the story so breathlessly gasped out, Uncle Ben said:

"Well, we'll go and see about this. Show me the growlery hole."

Eagerly Tom and Ted led the way, hurrying on ahead of the sailor. Mrs. Martin, with Trouble, Janet, and Lola followed.

"There it is!" cried Ted, pointing.

"Me want my wed ball!" cried Trouble.

Uncle Ben looked at the hole. Then he took the stick which had been left beside it and poked it down. Suddenly, just as had happened when the boys and Mrs. Martin did this, there was a growl, followed by a tiny bark.

"Oh, ho! I know what that is!" said Uncle Ben.

From his pocket he took a heavy leather glove that he used when he worked around the motor in the gasolene boat. Drawing this glove on his hand, the old sailor

stretched out on the ground, and thrust his hand and arm into the hole as far as it would go. Then he seemed to be feeling around, down inside, and a moment later he pulled something out of the hole.

"Is it my wed ball?" asked Trouble.

"It's a baby dog!" cried Janet, as she caught sight of something alive and wiggling in Uncle Ben's gloved hand.

"No, it's a little baby fox," said Uncle Ben. "That's what the growlery hole is, children—the den of a fox. But the big foxes are out now, hunting chickens, perhaps. Only the little ones are at home. This is one of them."

He held out a little animal with a sharp nose, a rather large tail, and very bright eyes for the children to see. The baby fox tried to get away, but Uncle Ben held it firmly though gently.

"Could we take it home with us?" asked Ted eagerly.

"I'm afraid it's too small to be taken away from the mother fox," answered Uncle Ben. "Later on, perhaps, we can come back and get one of the little foxes when they are bigger. I once knew a boy who had a tame fox for a pet. But after a while it began to steal

chickens from the neighbors' coops, so the boy had to let his fox go."

"Did de fox eat my wed ball?" Trouble wanted to know.

"I guess not," answered Uncle Ben. "I'll feel around down there and see if I can get it. I'll hurry though. There are three or four little foxes in there, and the father and mother fox may come back at any moment, and as they can bite pretty hard when they try, I don't want my hand in the hole then, even with a glove on. I put it on because I thought there were foxes in the hole, and I guessed right."

Uncle Ben gave Mrs. Martin the baby fox to hold in her lap while he put his hand down in the hole again. The tiny animal did not seem afraid now, and it did not try to bite. The five children stroked its soft pretty fur gently.

"Here's your rubber ball, Trouble," said Uncle Ben at last, as he pulled his arm out of the fox hole for the second time.

"Are the little foxes there yet?" asked Tom.

"No, they seem to have gone farther back in the den," answered the sailor. "And I guess we'd better put this one back with his

brothers and sisters, so he'll be there when his father and mother come back."

After the children had given a last look at the little wild animal, Uncle Ben put it down at the mouth of the hole, and in the tiny chap scampered, probably very glad to be at home again. Then with Trouble holding tightly to his red ball, the picnic party went down to the boat, talking on the way of the fine time they had had.

"It was a regular adventure!" exclaimed Tom.

"It surely was," agreed Ted. "I'm coming back next week and get a fox."

"So'm I," cried all the other children.

Across Silver Lake puffed the motor boat, and soon they were all at Sunnyside once more. Daddy Martin was there to greet them, having spent the day at his office in Cresco, coming down on the evening train.

Of course he had to be told all about the picnic and the loss of Trouble's ball, the finding of it in the growlery hole, and the way the chipmunk took Lola's jam tart.

"How does it look at our house, Daddy?" asked Ted of his father.

"Oh, just about the same," was the answer. "It's lonesome, though, with you

Curlytops away. I wouldn't want to stay in Cresco without you."

"Did you see Miss Ransom?" asked Janet. "And did she get back her queer box that the burglars took?"

"Yes, I saw her. But she hasn't her box yet, and they haven't caught the burglars," answered her father.

"You didn't see Skyrocket, did you?" asked Ted.

"No," was the answer, "I didn't."

The next morning after breakfast Uncle Ben came up from the little office on the end of the pier that Mr. Martin owned.

"Some of our rowboats drifted off in the night," said the sailor to Mr. Martin. "A man told me they were about a mile down the lake shore. I'll take the motor launch and go after them. Do any of the children want to come?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Ted and Janet, Lola and Tom.

"Me tum too!" cried Trouble.

"I can take them all if you'll let me," said the sailor to Mrs. Martin.

"Well, take them," she said. "Now be good children with Uncle Ben!" she told them, as they started off.

"Yes'm, we will!" was the answer.

It was a nice little trip down the lake after the missing boats. They were seen on shore, just where the man had told Uncle Ben they would be, and soon the sailor was tying them to the stern of the motor boat to tow them back.

While he was doing this, the children wandered along to a little shady cove, and Tom and Ted, who always carried fishlines in their pockets, started to try their luck.

Uncle Ben had made fast the last boat, and he was going in search of the children, whom he could hear talking, but not see, when Lola came running up to him.

"Oh, Uncle Ben! Uncle Ben!" she cried. "A big white bird has got hold of Trouble, and it's trying to fly away with him! Come and get Trouble away from the big, white bird!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE BAD DOG

Uncle Ben fastened the last knot of the rope by which he was tying the rowboats to the launch. Then he glanced quickly up at Lola.

"What's that you said?" he asked.

"I said a big, white bird is trying to take Trouble away," answered Lola.

"Well, why don't some of you older ones drive it away?" asked Uncle Ben, hardly thinking of what he was saying. "Are you afraid of a bird?" he asked.

"Oh, it's a terrible big bird!" exclaimed Lola, spreading out her arms like wings. "It's awful big, Uncle Ben!"

"Is it an eagle?" asked the sailor. "No, it can't be that, either. I never heard of a white eagle," he said.

"I don't know what it is," said Lola. "But please hurry, Uncle Ben. Tom and

Ted aren't there, and Jan is trying to make the big white bird let go of Trouble, only it won't let go."

"It must be a big white owl!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, as he started to run, for he now heard the cries of Jan and the screams of Baby William. "I've heard of big white owls hurting people, but I thought owls only flew around at night. They can't see very well in daylight."

"Oh, it isn't an owl!" exclaimed Lola, who was running as fast as she could to keep up with Uncle Ben. "I've seen owls, and they have big eyes. This bird has big wings and a big, long neck, and it swims in the lake."

"Then it isn't an owl! Owls don't swim, I'm sure of that!" said Uncle Ben.

He hurried along, and soon he had crossed the top of the small hill over which Lola had come to summon his help. Down in a little hollow on the shore of the lake the sailor saw Trouble and Janet trying to beat off a big, white bird that had hold of Trouble's loose bloomers with its yellow bill.

"Oh, Uncle Ben! Uncle Ben! Come quick!" cried Jan, as she saw the sailor over the top of the grassy hill. "He's trying to pull Trouble into the water!"

"Bless my hat!" cried Uncle Ben, as he saw what was going on. "It's a wild swan. I've heard folks tell about them coming to the lake, but this is the first I've seen here. Don't be afraid, Trouble!" he called. "It's only a swan bird and it won't hurt you!"

Quickly Uncle Ben ran down to the edge of the water and caught up Trouble in his arms. He had to pull the loose bloomers out of the big, yellow bill of the large white swan that had hold of the cloth. And as Uncle Ben did this the swan spread out its wings and hissed, just as geese hiss at you when they think you are going to hurt them.

"Go on away, Mr. or Mrs. Swan, whatever you are!" cried Uncle Ben, as he held Trouble safely in his arms. "Go on away! Shoo! We won't hurt you and we don't want you to bother us!"

Janet had run back from the shore as soon as she saw that her brother was safe, and a moment later, putting Trouble down so that Janet and Lola could look after him, Uncle Ben caught up a branch of a tree and waved it at the wild swan.

The big, white bird flapped its wings, stretched out its long neck, gave a hiss or two, and then began to flap its wings. A mo-

ment later, with a sort of "honking" sound, it began to half run, half fly along the top of the water. And then, suddenly, it seemed to jump up into the air, and away it flew, its neck stretched out in front like a yardstick.

"There it goes!" cried Uncle Ben, with a laugh. "Now it won't bother you any more, Trouble!"

"What was that big bird that just flew away?" cried Tom and Ted, hurrying up from the fishing cove.

"It was a wild swan," said Uncle Ben. "I never saw one by itself before. Generally they fly in flocks, sometimes eight or ten of them. They go from lake to lake, often staying a long while on the same one. But what did this one do, Janet?"

"Oh, Lola and I were just dabbling our hands and arms while we waited for you to fasten the boats," answered Ted's sister, "and Trouble was throwing little stones into the water, when, all of a sudden, this big, white bird came flying down out of the sky. He made a terrible splash in the water.

"Trouble went up to it, and held out his red rubber ball. The swan bit at it, and then it bit his bloomers and tried to pull Trouble into the lake."

"And I ran to get you," said Lola, "while Jan held on to Trouble."

"Oh, I guess the swan didn't really try to pull Trouble into the lake," said Uncle Ben. "Perhaps the swan isn't as wild as I thought. It may have lived once on a lake near people's houses. They get quite tame, and children feed them. The swans will take bits of bread from your hand.

"Maybe this swan thought Trouble's red ball was a new kind of bread, but when he nibbled it with its yellow bill he thought he had been fooled. Then he may have pulled on Trouble's bloomers to show that he was angry, or maybe that was his way of asking for something to eat."

"Well, he scared me, 'cause I thought he wanted Trouble!" exclaimed Jan.

"Bird scared Trouble," added Trouble.

"And me, too," said Lola. "I thought he'd fly away with Trouble."

"No, he couldn't do that," explained Uncle Ben. "A swan is quite a large and heavy bird. They have to run along the top of the water for a little distance, to get a start so they can fly, just as an airship has to run along on the ground before it can rise up. But a swan couldn't carry off even a

little baby, to say nothing of a boy as big as Trouble."

"Well, I'm glad it didn't take him," said Jan, as she held her small brother by the hand.

By this time the swan, flying over the lake, was almost out of sight, and as all the missing rowboats had been gathered together and fastened to the launch, Uncle Ben said it was best to start back for Sunnyside.

"Tom and I didn't catch a fish," said Ted. "We had some bites and nibbles, though."

"We won't wait here to fish," decided Uncle Ben. "We can come out in a boat tomorrow. We'd better get back home now. It looks like a storm."

And it did storm that night. There was a heavy rain and the wind blew very strongly. But the bungalow was snug and comfortable, and the waves from the lake could not reach it.

The Curlytops sat about the table after supper, when the lights were glowing, and told Daddy Martin about the wild swan that had caught hold of Trouble's bloomers with his yellow bill.

For two days it rained, and the children had to stay either in the bungalow or close

to it. No picnics or excursions came to Silver Lake, and if it had not been that Mr. and Mrs. Martin and Uncle Ben found many ways of making fun for the children they would have passed a dull time.

But the sailor knew what to do to make it lively in the house when it rained outside. He made up little games, as did Daddy Martin, and the Curlytops and their visitors played them.

Trouble, too, had fun with his red rubber ball, playing that it was a baby fox and chasing it as it rolled about the floor under the chairs.

Then Mrs. Martin, too, did her share to make sure that the children had a good time. She let them make candy, and, as you know, that's lots of fun. The only thing that happened that was not exactly fun, was when Trouble sat down in a pan of candy that had been put on a chair near the back door to cool.

Luckily for Trouble the candy was not hot, and all that happened was that some of the sticks, which Tom and Ted and Lola and Jan had pulled out so carefully from the sweet, sticky lump Mrs. Martin gave them, were spoiled. A pair of bloomers that Trouble

wore were all stuck up, of course, but his mother said she could soak the candy out of them in the wash.

On the third day the rain stopped, the sun came out, and with joyous shouts the Curly-tops ran from Sunnyside Bungalow and down to the shore of Silver Lake, followed by Tom and Lola, with Trouble stumbling after them.

"Now we can go fishing again!" cried Tom.

"And sailing!" added Ted.

"And we can go in the woods!" said Lola.

"And wading!" shouted Jan.

It was very beautiful at Silver Lake after the storm. The rain had washed all the dust from the leaves of the trees, and when the sun shone on the leaves they were such a bright green that it was most pleasant to look at. The showers, too, made more blossoms come out in the woods, and Jan gathered a fine bouquet for her mother, who liked blossoms in the bungalow. But Jan took good care not to slip into any more bog holes as she picked the posies.

One day Uncle Ben had to go up to the far end of the lake, to a small town named Cardiff, to get some things Mrs. Martin wanted.

Uncle Ben went in the motor boat, and he took Jan and Ted and Tom and Lola with him. Trouble was left at the bungalow with his mother.

"I wonder if anything will happen to-day?" said Ted, as he sat near Tom in the motor boat.

"What do you want to happen?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Oh, something queer—like a wild swan or a big fish," answered Ted.

"Well, maybe something will," said Uncle Ben. "We haven't got to Cardiff yet."

On chugged the motor boat, and in about an hour it was at the village where Uncle Ben was to buy the things for Mrs. Martin. The store was not far from the lake, and the children got out to go in with the sailor.

"Oh, they keep peanuts here!" exclaimed Ted, as he saw some in a glass case.

"Yes, they're nice and freshly roasted," said the storekeeper.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom, and then he and the others looked at Uncle Ben. "Oh!" sighed Tom again.

"Well, I guess a few peanuts wouldn't hurt the youngsters," said the sailor good-naturedly. "Their mother didn't say not to

let them have any, so you may give them a bag each."

"Oh, thank you!" said the Curlytops and their friends in chorus, as the bags of peanuts, still warm from the roaster, were handed to them.

"Where are you folks stopping?" asked the storekeeper, as he finished doing up the grocery packages for Uncle Ben.

"At Sunnyside Bungalow," answered Ted.

"Got any dogs at your place?" the man, whose name was Mr. Blake, went on.

"No, we had a dog, but he went away," answered Janet.

"Oh, he did!" exclaimed Mr. Blake. "Was your dog a bad dog?"

"Oh, no! He was good!" exclaimed Teddy.

"And his name was Skyrocket!" added Janet.

"Well, if your dog was a good dog I'm not looking for him," went on the storekeeper. "I'm looking for a bad dog that has been taking my chickens and chasing my sheep. He's taken other folks' chickens, too!"

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed Uncle Ben. "So there are bad dogs around here, are there?

Are you sure, Mr. Blake, that it isn't a fox? I found a fox den over in the woods the other day."

"No, this is a big yellow dog," answered Mr. Blake. "I saw him carrying off one of my chickens, and one of my men saw him chasing my sheep early the other morning. A farmer saw him do the same thing at his place. I'd like to find out who owns that dog. I'd make them take him away, or keep him shut up. I don't like to lose chickens and sheep. I ask every one who comes into my store if he has a dog. Some day I'm going to find out who has that bad, yellow one."

Just then a farmer entered the store, and, as he heard what Mr. Blake was saying, he exclaimed:

"I think I can tell you where to find that dog you're talking about. He's at a Gypsy camp about five miles from here."

CHAPTER XVII

A JOYOUS FIND

JANET and Ted looked at each other and then at Tom and Lola Taylor when the farmer spoke the word "Gypsy."

"What's that you say?" asked Mr. Blake, who was a little deaf. "Did you say you knew where the bad dog was that's been chasing my sheep and taking my chickens, Mr. Addison?"

"I think I can tell you where you might find him," was the answer. "I was driving past the Gypsy camp the other day, and I saw a lot of dogs near their tents and wagons. You know those Gypsies always do have a lot of dogs."

"Yes, they seem to be particularly fond of dogs and horses," agreed the storekeeper, hearing quite well now, for Mr. Addison, the farmer, spoke loudly.

"Well, among the other dogs was one big,

ugly, yellow one," went on Mr. Addison. "I shouldn't be surprised but what he was the one that's been around your place, Mr. Blake. And he's been at my place, too."

"There may be something in that!" exclaimed the storekeeper. "It surely was a yellow dog that chased my chickens, killing some, and taking others away with him. And it was a yellow dog that my hired man saw chasing my sheep."

"Do you keep sheep and chickens, as well as run this store?" asked Uncle Ben.

"Yes, I have a farm and a store," answered Mr. Blake. "And a dog that chases sheep is a bad animal to have around a farm."

"Our dog wouldn't chase sheep!" exclaimed Janet.

"I'm glad to know that," Mr. Blake replied. "Now I think I'll take a trip over to that Gypsy camp, and if they have a sheep and chicken chasing dog there, I'll get the constable after them and make them either get rid of the yellow dog or keep him chained up."

"Oh, could we go with you?" cried Ted, almost before he knew what he was saying.

"Go with me? Why do you want to go

to the Gypsy camp?" asked the farmer storekeeper, in surprise.

"Because maybe the Gypsies have our dog Skyrocket," answered Ted.

"Oh, maybe they have!" cried Janet, clapping her hands excitedly.

"Why, I thought you said your dog ran away," went on Mr. Blake. And he looked first at Uncle Ben and then at the children.

"But I saw Skyrocket in a Gypsy wagon!" cried Tom. "And maybe these Gypsies have him. Oh, I hope they have!"

"Hum!" said Mr. Blake, as he got up from his seat on a nail keg to weigh out a pound of sugar for a barefooted boy who came into the store. "Hum! Let me hear the whole story, children. There may be more out at this Gypsy camp than we think there is."

So Janet and Ted told how Skyrocket had been lost, and Tom told how, later on, he had seen one of the Gypsy wagons going along with a black dog in it, that looked just like the Curlytops' pet.

"And if these Gypsies are the same ones, maybe they have Skyrocket out at their camp now," finished Tom.

"They surely have a lot of dogs out there —I saw 'em," said Mr. Addison, the farmer

who had first mentioned the Gypsies. "And that big, yellow one looked as savage as a wolf. I'm sure he's a bad sheep dog. I think he took some of my sheep and chickens, too."

"Well, we'll go and take a look!" said Mr. Blake, the storekeeper, after thinking a few minutes. "I'll get my wife to stay behind the counter to-morrow, and I'll go up and look over this Gypsy camp."

"And may we come and bring back Skyrocket—that is, if he's there?" begged Teddy.

Mr. Blake looked at Uncle Ben.

"I wish you could take the children there," said the sailor. "How would it be if we all went in the motor boat to-morrow? I could run you up to the end of the lake, and you could go to the camp from there, couldn't you?"

"Yes, that would be the best way," answered Mr. Addison. "It's nearer by water, too, than by going around the road."

"Could you come with us to show us where the camp is, and where you saw the yellow dog?" asked Mr. Blake.

"Yes, I could go with you," was the answer.

"Then we'll make up a party, and go up to the end of the lake the first thing in the morning," decided Uncle Ben. "I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Martin will let the children go if there is a chance to get back Skyrocket."

"Oh, I hope you can find him!" whispered Lola to Janet.

"I hope so, too," replied the little Curly-top girl.

After a little further talk with the two men, Uncle Ben took the things he had bought down to the dock where he had left the boat, and soon he and the children were on their way back across Silver Lake.

All the way home Ted and Janet, with Lola and Tom, talked of nothing but what they had heard of the Gypsy camp, and they wondered if Skyrocket would be found there.

"I wish I could be with you when you go up there to-morrow," said Daddy Martin, when he heard the story of the yellow dog, the missing chickens, and the sheep that had been chased so hard that some of them died. "But I have to go back to Cresco the first thing in the morning."

"But we can go look for Skyrocket, can't we?" asked Ted anxiously.

"Oh, yes, Uncle Ben can take you there,"

his father answered. "I guess, with him and the storekeeper, and the farmer you'll be enough to make the Gypsies be good. And if you see Skyrocket——"

"I'll just hug him and bring him home!" exclaimed Janet.

"Me want to hug Skywocket, too!" exclaimed Baby William.

"You'll have to wait until they bring him home, Trouble, dear," said his mother. "That is, if they are lucky enough to find him."

When supper was over and after they had played about in the woods a bit, the Curlytops and their visitors went to bed. Trouble, some little time before, had nodded off to sleep in his mother's arms. Mr. and Mrs. Martin, with Uncle Ben, sat up in the bungalow, talking over what had happened during the day.

"Do you really think Skyrocket may be at the Gypsy camp?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"I don't see how he could be," her husband said. "Of course, it may have happened that the children's dog was stolen by Gypsies, just as it may have been Gypsies that went into Mrs. Ransom's store and took her queer box and other things. But it

would be too much to have it happen that the Gypsies camping at the upper end of this lake are the same ones who took the Curlytops' pet dog."

"Well, it could happen," said Ted's mother.

"Yes, it *could,*" agreed her husband, "but I don't believe it will. I'm afraid Skyrocket will never be found, though I wish he would, for our Curlytops miss him so much."

"We'll know by this time to-morrow whether or not he is in the Gypsy camp," said Uncle Ben. "We'll start early in the morning, and make a trip of it. I have to go over to Cardiff to pick up Mr. Blake and Mr. Addison first."

"Well, I hope you'll find Skyrocket," said Mr. Martin, as he went about the bungalow, locking up for the night. "But I'm afraid you will not, and the children will be very much disappointed."

"I'll try to give them a good time on the water, in case we don't find their dog," answered Uncle Ben.

All was still and quiet in the bungalow a little later. Every one was fast asleep, and I am quite sure the Curlytops, and perhaps Tom and Lola, were dreaming of going to the

Gypsy camp and maybe having their fortunes told.

All of a sudden came a loud cry that awakened every one in Sunnyside.

"Oh, I've got him! I've got him!" shouted the voice of Ted Martin. "I've got him! He came back to me! He got away from the Gypsies and now he's here!"

"Hush, Teddy! Hush, my dear!" called his mother from the next room. "Wake up! Wake up! You're talking in your sleep!"

But Teddy kept on calling:

"I have him! Oh, I have Skyrocket! My dog has come back!"

"Teddy, be quiet! Wake up. You have the nightmare!" said his father, and, getting up, Mr. Martin hurried into the room of his little son.

Turning on the light, for there were electric lamps at Sunnyside, Mr. Martin saw Teddy sitting up on his cot. There was a strange look on the little boy's face.

"Where did he go?" he asked his father, in sleepy tones.

"Where did who go?" Mr. Martin asked, while Uncle Ben, from his room, called to know if anything was wrong.

"Only Teddy talking in his sleep," an-

swered Mr. Martin. "I guess he was dreaming he was at the Gypsy camp and had found Skyrocket; weren't you?" he asked the little boy.

"I did find Skyrocket," was the answer. "Skyrocket was right here. I felt his soft fur. He was right in bed with me. Oh, where did he go?"

Teddy spoke so loudly, and seemed so much in earnest that his mother came in and tried to quiet him.

"You'll wake Trouble up," she said; "and you know how hard it is to get him to sleep again. And you have already awakened all of us. It's all right, Tom and Lola!" she called to the visitors. "It was just Teddy talking in his sleep. He thought he had Skyrocket."

"I really did have him, Mother!" Teddy insisted. "I could feel his soft fur, and he was right in my bed."

"Nonsense, Teddy!" exclaimed his father. "You just dreamed it!"

"No! Look! Oh, I feel him now!" cried the little boy. "Here he is in bed with me! He's under the covers, down by my feet!"

His father and mother looked. Surely enough, something was moving under the

bed clothes, and it was not Teddy's toes that were wiggling, for they could be seen, sticking up under the sheet, off to one side.

Daddy Martin, with a quick motion, turned back the sheet. Out on the floor jumped a big gray animal with a very large tail.

"That's what it was!" cried Teddy. "I knew I felt something soft and fuzzy."

"It's a big gray squirrel!" said Mr. Martin. "He must have crawled in bed with Teddy. No wonder you felt something like Skyrocket's fuzzy coat," he added.

"Oh, get the squirrel for me!" begged Teddy. But the squirrel did not wait to be caught. It was one thing to be in a soft warm bed in the dark with a little boy, but quite another to have big folks looking at him in the light. So the squirrel scurried out of an open window and disappeared in the darkness off the porch.

"There! it wasn't a dream, was it?" asked Teddy, when it was certain that the squirrel had gone.

"No, it was part real," his father said with a laugh. "Now go to sleep."

Nothing else disturbed the Curlytops or the others in the bungalow that night, and in

the morning after breakfast they started for Cardiff, there to get Mr. Blake and Mr. Addison, and then go on to the Gypsy camp.

"Did you lose any more chickens, or were your sheep chased in the night?" asked Uncle Ben of the storekeeper, when the two men came down to the dock.

"Yes," was the answer. "That bad, yellow dog was around again, and I fired my gun at him, but I didn't hit him. He ran off toward the place where Mr. Addison says the Gypsy camp is."

"Well, we'll soon be there and we can see for ourselves," replied Uncle Ben.

"Will it be all right for the children?" asked Mr. Addison, as he noticed Ted and Janet and Tom and Lola in the boat.

"Oh, yes," answered Uncle Ben. "I guess we three men are enough to make the Gypsies be good. Besides, we can have them arrested if they try any tricks."

Off puffed the motor boat once more, and after about an hour's ride they reached a little cove, or bay. From there a path led to the Gypsy camp, Mr. Addison said.

The boat was chained and locked to a pier, and then the party started through the woods. The children were very much ex-

cited, looking on each side as they went along, each one hoping to get the first sight of the camp.

"There's the place!" said Mr. Addison, after a while, in a low voice. He pointed through the trees. The Curlytops and the others could see some white tents and a number of red and yellow wagons, with bits of looking-glass fastened on the sides.

It was the Gypsy camp.

Eagerly Ted and Tom pressed forward, running ahead of Uncle Ben and the others. As the boys came out on a little open space, around which were the tents and wagons, Ted caught sight of a small, black dog.

"There he is! There he is!" cried the Curlytop lad. "I've found Skyrocket! Hurrah!"

But, as he spoke, he and Tom saw a big, dark-skinned Gypsy man with gold rings in his ears grab the black dog up in his arms and hurry into a tent with him.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE LAKE

JUST as soon as Ted called out that he had found Skyrocket, in fact before that, and while the Curlytops and their friends were walking through the woods toward the camp, there was a great deal of excitement among the Gypsies. The dark-skinned people, who lived in tents and in funny red wagons with looking-glasses on the outside, seemed to think that the coming of the strangers meant that something was going to happen. And it was.

"That was Skyrocket! I know it was!" cried Ted, pointing toward the tent into which the Gypsy man, with rings in his ears, had taken the black dog.

"I know it was, too!" added Janet. "Oh, Uncle Ben, please get our dog back!" she begged. "That was Skyrocket, wasn't it?" she asked Lola.

"It looked like him," declared Tom's sister, while Tom Taylor said:

"Course it was! That was Skyrocket, and that's the same Gypsy man that I saw have him before—the time I told you about."

"Easy now, children! Easy!" said Uncle Ben, in a low voice. "We want to be sure we're right before we go ahead. If we make a mistake and claim some dog that isn't ours, there may be trouble."

"I think there is going to be trouble anyhow," said Mr. Addison, speaking to Uncle Ben and Mr. Blake. "These Gypsies don't look very pleasant."

"Well, they'd better behave themselves or they'll get into trouble," said Mr. Blake. "Now then, Mr. Wilson," he went on, speaking to Uncle Ben, "we'll let you do the talking. If that is the Curlytops' dog, we want to get it, and you know most about it."

"All right then," agreed Uncle Ben. "We'll see what happens."

Uncle Ben walked on ahead, followed by Ted and Jan and Tom and Lola.

The children were interested and curious when they saw a number of not very friendly looking Gypsy men and women around the tents and wagons. There were Gypsy boys

and girls, too, but they did not smile at the newcomers. Instead, the Gypsy children seemed to be hiding in among the tents and wagons. And there were some little Gypsy babies, also, which their mothers carried about wrapped in shawls. The shawls were bright green, red, or yellow. Gypsies like bright colors and things that shine—that's why they put looking-glasses on the outside of their wagons as well as inside.

As Uncle Ben, the children, Mr Blake, and Mr. Addison walked along the woodland path, through the Gypsy camp, they were met by the same big, dark-skinned Gypsy man who had taken the black dog into the tent.

"Good morning," said Uncle Ben, in a pleasant voice, as he stood still. The Curlytops and Tom and Lola came to a halt behind Uncle Ben.

"Mornin'," answered the Gypsy man, and he did not seem to be very pleasant.

"We called to ask about a dog," went on Uncle Ben. "I see you have a number of dogs here."

"Yes, we have dogs," answered the Gypsy. That was true enough, for there were many dogs and horses scattered here and there

about the camp, some behind the tents and red wagons. "We have dogs and horses. Want to buy some?"

"No, we don't exactly want to *buy* a dog," answered Uncle Ben.

"Well, we don't give dogs away," said the Gypsy, who spoke the same language as did Uncle Ben, though perhaps the dark-skinned man could talk in his own special language, too. "We sell dogs. What kind do you want to buy?"

Eagerly Ted and Jan listened for what Uncle Ben would answer, and he replied:

"We'd like to get that little black dog you took into the tent just as we came along. That's the dog we want."

"That dog is not to be sold!" cried the Gypsy, and this was more than Ted could stand.

"That's our dog!" exclaimed the little boy. "That's our dog Skyrocket, and we want him back! He got lost from our house. He climbed out the woodshed window, and we want him."

"Yes, we want Skyrocket!" added Janet. "He didn't ever sleep on his new piece of carpet that Teddy put in his box. Please, Mr. Gypsy man, give us back our dog!"

The Gypsy with the gold rings in his ears scowled as he answered:

"I have not your dog! That black dog is mine!"

And at this Mr. Addison broke in with:

"Yes, and I suppose that big yellow dog is yours, too!" and he pointed to a large yellow animal that was sneaking around behind a red wagon. The yellow dog was not what you would call a friendly dog. He was more like a wolf or a fox. "Is that your dog?" asked Mr. Addison, pointing to the animal.

"Yes, that's my dog, too," answered the Gypsy.

"Then you're just the man I'm looking for!" exclaimed the farmer. "That's the yellow dog that's been chasing my sheep and taking my chickens. And he took Mr. Blake's sheep and chickens, too! Now then, I'm a deputy sheriff of this county. As you know, that's just as good as a policeman in the city. And either you've got to get rid of that yellow dog and pay me for the loss of my lambs and chickens, and Mr. Blake for his, or I'll arrest you, and drive you away from this camp. Now, what's it going to be, Mr. Gypsy? I guess you'll find you have one dog too many!"

"My dog never kills sheep or chickens!" said the Gypsy, but he was not as bold as he had been at first.

"Well, plenty of farmers near me have seen this yellow dog of yours, and they know what he has done," said Mr. Addison. "Now, either you'll get rid of that yellow dog, or you'll get out of here," and he spoke sharply.

"Well, if my yellow dog hurt your sheep or chickens I didn't know it," said the Gypsy, and his voice was quite different now.

"I'm telling you about it," said Mr. Addison. "And, what's more, you've got to pay us for the animals and fowls your dog killed. And now what about this other dog—the black one that belongs to these children? Where's the dog Skyrocket?"

"I don't know," answered the Gypsy. "I haven't got their dog."

"Oh, you have so!" cried Jan.

"I saw you take a black dog into the tent. That was Skyrocket!" added Ted.

"No! No!" cried the Gypsy, getting angry again.

All the other Gypsies, men and women, boys and girls, were now gathered in the

middle of the camp, around Uncle Ben, the children, the farmer and storekeeper.

"Look here," put in Uncle Ben. "It's easy to settle this matter. Let us have a look at that black dog, and then we can tell for sure if he belongs to the Curlytops. Bring out the little black dog."

"He is mine I tell you!" exclaimed the Gypsy. "I've had him a long time."

"Well, Skyrocket has been gone a long time," said Janet.

"Bring out the dog," ordered Mr. Addison, and he showed the shiny, nickel badge he wore on his vest, to prove that he was a deputy sheriff; a man who can arrest people.

"I show you that not your dog!" said the Gypsy. "I show you!"

Quickly he went into the tent, and in a moment he came out with a little black dog in his arms. It was a dog much smaller than Skyrocket, and of a different breed.

"That your dog?" cried the Gypsy, holding out the small black poodle.

"No, that isn't Skyrocket," said Teddy, in a sad voice.

"What I tell you?" demanded the dark-skinned man.

Janet looked disappointed. Mr. Blake, who had not spoken since entering the Gypsy camp, now stepped forward and called out:

"I saw you take a black dog into that tent, and this isn't the same dog. You have another black one there. Here, I'll take a look!"

Before any of the Gypsies could stop him Mr. Blake pressed forward, passed the man with the gold rings in his ears, and a moment later the storekeeper was inside the tent. Some one else inside it gave a frightened cry, and then there sounded the excited barking of a dog.

"I thought so!" cried Mr. Blake, and in another instant out of the tent he stepped, and in his arms was a wildly struggling black dog.

"Oh, that's Skyrocket! That's Skyrocket!" cried Teddy, springing forward.

"That's our dog!" echoed Janet, and she and her brother both tried at once to take the wiggling animal from the arms of Mr. Blake.

The Gypsy man, with a scowl on his face, started forward, but he was caught by Uncle Ben.

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed the sailor.

"Take it easy now. Whose dog is that?" and he pointed to the larger black one which was now trying to jump into the arms of both Ted and Janet at the same time, meanwhile wagging his tail as if he would wag it off, and barking and whining, so glad was he to see the Curlytops again.

"That's my dog!" answered the Gypsy. "I have had him a long while."

"Your dog, is it?" asked Uncle Ben. "Well, we'll see about this. Put him on the ground, Jan, and we'll see who he goes to. Put the dog down, Teddy!"

It was hard work to do this, for the black animal was frisking around the Curlytops, crazy with joy. But at last the dog was made to stand still for a second or two, though he kept on wagging his tail and looking from Ted to Janet and from Janet to Ted as if he feared to lose sight of them for a moment.

"Now then, Mr. Gypsy, you call this dog, and see if he'll come to you," ordered Uncle Ben. "Call him to you."

"Here, Jack! Jack! Come here!" commanded the Gypsy, and he whistled and snapped his fingers. "Come here!"

The dog gave one look at the Gypsy, and

then the animal's tail dropped between his legs and he crouched down.

"That dog certainly doesn't like you! He is afraid of you!" said Uncle Ben.

"He is a bad dog!" the Gypsy declared.

"Skyrocket is not a bad dog!" exclaimed Teddy.

And then a curious thing happened.

No sooner had Teddy mentioned the name "Skyrocket" than the dog, which had been slowly and tremblingly creeping toward the Gypsy, turned, and, with a joyful bark, sprang toward the Curlytop boy and girl. In another instant he was being hugged in their arms.

"I guess that shows whose dog he is!" said Mr. Blake.

"I should say so!" cried the farmer. "Now then, Mr. Gypsy, what have you to say for yourself? Where did you get that dog which belongs to these children?"

"That's my dog!" said the Gypsy again.

"Your dog! He's only your dog because you found him, or took him away from his home!" cried Uncle Ben. "You've beaten him and made him afraid of you while you've had him, but you sha'n't have him any more. Curlytops, that's Skyrocket sure

enough. He knows his name when you speak it only once, and he came to you without calling, while he was afraid of this Gypsy. Now you have your dog back!"

"And we'll never let him go again!" said Janet.

"Now look here, you Gypsies!" said Mr. Addison in a stern voice. "You'll be allowed to camp here just as long as you behave yourselves, and no longer. Get rid of that yellow dog that kills sheep and chickens, and don't take any more pet dogs and you'll be better off. Remember what I say —don't take any more pet dogs that belong to children!" and he shook his finger warningly at the dark-skinned man.

"I didn't know it was their dog!" growled the Gypsy. "He came to me on the road and I kept him."

"Well, maybe he did, and maybe he didn't," went on the deputy sheriff. "Anyhow we've found what we came after and you heard what I said. We'll be on the watch now. And you get rid of that bad yellow dog!"

The Gypsy muttered something that no one could hear, and there were growls and grumbles from the other men and boys, while

the women, each one of whom wore a bright shawl or dress, talked among themselves in the Gypsy tongue.

"Come on now, children, we'll be getting back to camp," said Uncle Ben. "Is Skyrocket all right, Ted?"

"Yes. But I guess he didn't get much to eat while the Gypsies had him," the Curlytop boy answered. "He's awful thin."

"And I guess they beat him," added Janet. "Skyrocket was never afraid of anybody before."

"Yes, I guess the Gypsies didn't treat him very kindly," said Uncle Ben. "But you can make it up to him from now on. Take good care of him."

"We will!" said Janet and Ted.

You can imagine how glad Mrs. Martin was, and Trouble and Mr. Martin and Nora, also, to welcome Skyrocket to Sunnyside Bungalow. It was a new place for Skyrocket, but he soon made himself at home, and a little bed was got ready for him on the porch.

"And if any Gypsies come to take you away again, I'll—I'll scratch 'em!" declared Janet.

"And I'll help!" added Lola.

"Well, I guess those Gypsies won't make any more trouble," said Uncle Ben. "If they don't behave themselves Mr. Addison will arrest every one of 'em."

But from then on there was no further trouble from the dark-skinned Gypsies, and the yellow dog no longer chased sheep and chickens. Either he was sent away or kept chained up in the woods.

It was two or three days after Skyrocket had been found that something else happened which caused excitement at Sunnyside. Daddy Martin had been back in Cresco, looking after some business about his store, and he came to Silver Lake in the automobile one evening, to stay about a week, he said.

"How is everything back in Cresco?" asked Uncle Ben, as he helped Mr. Martin take some groceries out of the automobile.

"Oh, all right," answered the father of the Curlytops. "There has been another robbery, though."

"Was it at our house?" asked Tom Taylor, who, with his sister and the Curlytops, was listening to what Mr. Martin was saying. "Did burglars get into our house as they did into Miss Ransom's store?"

"No, it wasn't at your house," answered Ted's father. "It was at Mr. Henderson's hardware store. Thieves got in there last night and took a lot of knives, forks, and things like that."

"Did they take any funny box, with a secret drawer in, like Miss Ransom's?" Ted asked.

"I didn't hear anything about a queer box," answered his father. "But I brought a newspaper. There it is, Uncle Ben. It says a big storm is on the way, and may reach here by morning. I guess we'd better tie the boats up so they won't blow about and be wrecked. There's a big wind storm on the way here from the west."

"Out west, where Uncle Frank's ranch is?" asked Janet.

"Well, perhaps not quite as far as that," answered her father. "But we'll have to get ready for the storm."

"And after supper will you tell us more about the burglars at Mr. Henderson's store?" asked Ted.

"I guess so," replied his father.

But after supper was a busy time for Daddy Martin and Uncle Ben. There were many boats to be tied fast, or put in safe places.

Trouble stayed with his mother on the bungalow porch, but Ted and Tom did what they could to help. Lola and Jan went down to the dock to help, too. Just how much help they were I am not going to try to say.

It was getting dusk, and the wind was beginning to blow pretty hard.

"I think the storm is coming now," said Mrs. Martin to Nora. "We had better see to shutting some of the windows."

At that moment Lola and Janet came running up the path that led from the bungalow down to the dock and shore of Silver Lake. The two little girls seemed much excited.

"Oh, Mother!" cried Janet. "He's in! They're both in!"

"Both in where? And who's in?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Ted's in, and so's Tom," answered Janet. "They both fell into the lake off the pier!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE SHIPWRECK

"Look after Trouble!" Mrs. Martin cried to the two girls the moment Janet told this startling news to her mother. "I'll get the boys out of the lake!"

Down the path she ran, and so quickly had she gotten up that she knocked Trouble down. He sat down on the porch, rather hard, and he was just going to cry, not knowing what it was all about, when Janet took him up in her arms.

"Don't cry, Trouble! Don't cry!" she said.

"Trouble fell down!" said the little fellow, in a voice that sounded tearful. "Momsie make Trouble fall!"

"But she didn't mean to," said Lola, thinking to help Janet take care of Baby William. "Momsie has gone to help get Ted and Tom out of the lake."

"Trouble want to go in 'ake!" exclaimed Janet's brother.

"Oh, no, Trouble! Two in a lake at once is enough!" said Janet. "I wonder if they're out yet," she added.

"Uncle Ben and Mr. Martin will have them out by this time," replied Lola. "We forgot to tell your mother that they were after them."

And when the mother of the Curlytops reached the end of the path from the bungalow, where she could look down to the lake and the dock her husband owned, she saw that Uncle Ben and Mr. Martin were lifting from the water two small, dripping boys.

"Oh, they've got them out!" gasped Mrs. Martin, and she did not run so fast now, for she was quite out of breath. "Oh, I thought Ted and Tom had fallen in when no one was near to help them!"

As she reached the pier she saw Ted and Tom placed on the end of it—Tom by Uncle Ben and Ted by his father. Water gushed out from the shoes of the small boys, and even seemed to splatter from their many pockets, and both of them were gasping and trying to wipe the drops from their eyes.

Skyrocket was prancing about and barking as loudly as he could bark. At the same time he was wagging his tail, and that was a good sign, for it showed he knew Ted and Tom were all right.

"What happened?" gasped Mrs. Martin, as she hurried down to the dock. "Are you hurt?"

"Not a bit!" answered Uncle Ben, with a laugh. "Only wet. And they'll soon dry in this wind."

The wind was, indeed, blowing hard, and it was bringing a storm with it. The lake was getting rough.

"What happened, Teddy?" asked his mother.

"Oh, it was just a little accident," explained Mr. Martin, as he and Uncle Ben got out of a boat from which they had reached over and pulled Ted and Tom out of the water. "The boys were helping us make everything snug from the storm that is coming, when Ted slipped off the pier and went into the lake."

"And Tom tried to grab me, and he fell in, too!" added Ted. "Then we were both in, and we couldn't swim very well with our clothes on." Ted and Tom could both swim

a little, not so very well though even with their clothes off.

"I could 'a' caught you if I'd 'a' seen you falling in," declared Tom. "But you went in so quick!"

"Yes, it didn't take him long!" laughed Mr. Martin. "He seemed to jump in as quickly as a frog jumps in off a log when he hears a boy with a dog coming."

"And then what happened?" asked Mrs. Martin, as she wiped some of the water off Tom's face with her handkerchief.

"Oh, well, Uncle Ben and I were right here. We jumped into a boat," said Mr. Martin, "and reached over and lifted the boys out. They were trying to swim, but couldn't very well. Did you swallow much water?" he asked them.

"A little," admitted Ted.

"And I ate some, too," said Tom. "It's better than the ocean water, 'cause it isn't salty."

"Go up to the house now and get on dry clothes," advised Mr. Martin. "Uncle Ben and I will finish making fast the boats."

"Yes, come with me," said Ted's mother.

Ted and Tom went up the hill with Mrs. Martin, just as Janet and Lola, leading

Trouble by the hand, were coming down to the dock.

"Oh, are they all right?" asked the two little girls.

"All right! We had a swim with our clothes on!" boasted Tom.

So the little accident was soon over, and no one was much the worse.

"Well, now it can blow as much as it likes," said Daddy Martin after supper that night, when they were all sitting on the bungalow porch. "All our boats are snug, the candy house on the pier is shut up, and we are ready for rain or snow."

"Oh, not snow, Daddy!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "We aren't ready for snow. This bungalow would be too cold for the Curlytops to be snowed in."

"Oh, do you 'member how we got snowed in once?" asked Janet of her brother.

"Sure I do," he answered. "Say, we did have lots of fun then!"

And those of you who have read about what took place when the Curlytops were snowed in will recall what happened to Ted, Janet and the others.

"I think the storm is coming along fast," said Uncle Ben, as he listened to the sigh-

ing of the wind in the trees around the bungalow. "It's going to rain, but I don't believe it will snow, though it may hail, and hail stones are worse than snow."

"Can we throw hail stones, Uncle Ben?" asked Ted, while he built up a little house of dominoes for Trouble on the floor of the porch.

"Well, if they don't melt too soon you might throw hail stones," answered the sailor.

So they sat on the porch and talked until it was time to go to bed. Meanwhile the wind blew harder and harder.

Then, in the middle of the night it began to rain. But the Curlytops and Trouble, and Tom and Lola did not know this, for they were asleep. Skyrocket, the dog, who slept in a little box on the porch, was awakened by the storm, and whined. He was lonesome, so Mrs. Martin let him into the bungalow for the rest of the night.

In the morning, when the Curlytops and their friends awakened and looked from the window, they saw how bad the storm was. It was raining very hard, and the wind blew in great gusts that shook the trees, and bent the smaller ones half way to the earth.

"Oh, look at the lake!" cried Ted, as he pressed his nose flat against the window. "See the big waves!"

"I wouldn't want to be out on it now," added Janet.

"Pooh! I'd go out on it now, if I had a big boat; wouldn't you, Ted?" asked Tom.

"Sure I—well, maybe I would if daddy went with me," was the answer.

"We'll not try it," said his father. "You had better stay around here."

"Can't we go out at all?" asked Ted. "I have rubber boots and a rubber coat."

"Oh, you may go down on the pier after breakfast, if some one goes with you," said Mrs. Martin.

"Oh, can't I go too?" cried Janet.

"Yes, I think so. You all have rubber cloaks or coats and rubber boots," said Mr. Martin.

It did not seem to rain quite so hard after breakfast, though the wind was still very strong. So, when the four children were well wrapped up, Uncle Ben and Daddy Martin took them down to the dock to look at Silver Lake in a storm. Trouble wanted to go, also, but his mother made him stay in with her.

At first Trouble cried, but Nora made him a little paddy-cake, with sugar on it, when she was baking a pie, and this pleased Trouble almost as much as if he had gone out.

"Look at the big waves on the lake!" cried Ted, as he and the others walked out on the pier.

And indeed Silver Lake was very rough. The wind made quite high waves—not as high as on the ocean, of course, but quite too high for a small rowboat.

"Well, all our boats are safe," said Daddy Martin to Uncle Ben, as they stood on the pier near the children.

"Yes, I think so," answered the sailor. "Hello!" he suddenly cried, as he looked off across the white-capped waves. "There's a boat that isn't all right, though."

He pointed to a motor boat in the middle of the lake. It was being tossed to and fro, and as Ted and the others looked they saw something white waved from the boat.

"They're in trouble!" said Daddy Martin. "I guess their motor has stopped and they can't move. Maybe their boat is leaking."

"Is it a shipwreck?" asked Ted, who had

heard stories from Uncle Ben about great ships that were wrecked in big storms on the ocean.

"Well, yes, you might call it that," said Uncle Ben. "Oh, look!" cried the sailor. "They're going to turn over!"

As he spoke a big wave seemed to sweep over the motor boat that was out on the middle of the lake. Ted, Janet and the others, watching, saw the craft swing about. Again they saw something white waved, and a moment later the boat seemed to turn right over on its side and some men were spilled out into the water.

"They're shipwrecked now, all right!" cried Tom.

"Yes, indeed they are," said Mr. Martin.

"We'll have to go to their help," cried Uncle Ben, above the roar of the wind and the patter of the rain. "We'll have to go to the rescue!"

CHAPTER XX

THE QUEER BOX AGAIN

TED and Janet, as well as Lola and Tom, heard what Uncle Ben and Mr. Martin said. And the same thought came to the Curlytops and their friends.

"Oh, take us with you!" begged Teddy.

"We couldn't think of it, my boy," answered his father. "There may be hard work in getting those men out of the water, and besides, in this storm I couldn't dream of taking you little children out on the lake; could we, Uncle Ben?"

"No, indeed!" was the answer, and the sailor ran across the dock to loosen a large rowboat, in which he and Mr. Martin intended to go to the rescue.

"But we want to see you save the shipwreck!" exclaimed Ted. "Please Daddy, mayn't we go?"

"Of course not!" answered his father.

"But if you'll promise not to fall off the pier you may stay here and watch us. You can see all that happens from here."

Ted knew it would be of no use to ask again, so he made the best of it.

"Look!" suddenly said Tom. "The men are rowing away in a little boat."

He pointed to the motor boat, which was now right side up again, but was very low in the water, as if the waves, washing over it, had half filled it. And as he pointed the others saw what he meant.

The two men in the wrecked motor boat, who had been waving a white handkerchief as a signal, must have been towing a row-boat behind their launch. And when they were tossed into the lake by the storm, they swam around and got in the smaller craft. In this they were now rowing away from the wreck as hard as they could row.

"Well, I guess we don't have to go out to save them," said Uncle Ben, who was loosening a rope that held the largest of Mr. Martin's rowboats to the dock. "They are rescuing themselves."

"It does look so," replied Mr. Martin. "I wonder if they'll come here."

While Uncle Ben and Mr. Martin stood

on the pier, hardly knowing what to do, Ted saw something else.

"Look!" he cried, pointing over the windy waves. "There's another motor boat chasing the first one."

"Yes, there is a big craft coming from near the Point," said Uncle Ben. "And it looks as if they were going to the wreck."

Daddy Martin took a telescope from the boathouse at the dock, and through this glass, which made things that were far off seem close by, he looked across the lake.

"The second boat is Mr. Blake's," said the father of the Curlytops. "He's the storekeeper at the point. And Mr. Addison, the deputy sheriff, is in with him. They helped get Skyrocket back, you know."

"Maybe they're going to arrest the Gypsies that had Skyrocket," said Ted, leaning over to pat his dog, that had come out in the storm with the children.

"No, they wouldn't be out on the lake if they were after the Gypsies," said Uncle Ben.

"Maybe the men in the wreck were Gypsies," suggested Ted. "Look! They're rowing away fast!"

This was true enough. The two men who

had been spilled out of the motor boat, which now seemed to be sinking, were rowing away as fast as they could.

"And Mr. Blake's boat is chasin' 'em!" exclaimed Tom.

"No, Mr. Blake's boat is going up to the wreck," said Daddy Martin, as he looked through the telescope. "I think we'd better go out there, too," he added to Uncle Ben.

"All right. Just as you say," was the answer, and the sailor began to get out the oars.

"We'll go in the big motor boat," decided Daddy Martin. "At first when I thought we'd have to pick up the men, I thought the rowboat would be best. But now I think it will be better to go in the motor boat. We can get there more quickly, and if there is anybody left on the sinking boat we can take them off."

"Oh, can't we go if you go in the motor boat?" begged Ted.

Daddy Martin looked at Uncle Ben, and then, after a moment, the father of the Curlytops answered:

"Well, I think if we go in the big motor boat it will be all right. The wind isn't blow-

ing quite so hard now. Tumble in and come along. It will be all right."

"And can we take Skyrocket, too?" asked Janet.

"Oh, yes, bring your dog," said Uncle Ben.

Soon the Curlytops, with Tom and Lola, not forgetting Skyrocket, were aboard the *Gull*, as Daddy Martin's motor boat was named, and out over the lake they went.

The men rowing from the wreck were now some distance away from their sinking boat. The other motor boat, belonging to Mr. Blake, the storekeeper, was coming nearer and soon two men in it began waving their hands to Daddy Martin and Uncle Ben.

When they were near enough to talk, Daddy Martin called and asked:

"What's the matter?"

"A lot is the matter!" answered Mr. Blake, whom the children well remembered as having helped, with Mr. Addison, in getting Skyrocket away from the Gypsies. "A whole lot is the matter, Mr. Martin. There has been a robbery at the Point, and we are chasing after the robbers."

"Robbers!" cried Uncle Ben, while the Curlytops and Tom and Lola listened to hear

all that was said. "Robbers! What did they take, and where are they now?"

"They took a lot of money and stamps from the post-office," went on Mr. Blake. "They broke into it last night, in the storm, and blew open the safe. The wind and the rain made so much noise that no one heard them.

"This morning, when the postmaster came down to open his office, he saw what had happened. Then we heard about two strange men down at one of the docks in a motor boat, and we thought they might be the burglars; so Mr. Addison and I came after them. We've been chasing this boat for some time now, and a little while ago something happened to it. Maybe the motor blew up. It's sinking, isn't it?"

"That's what it is!" chimed in Mr. Addison. "Now we can catch the two men who were in it and find out whether or not they took the stamps and money from the post-office."

"I'm glad we're here," whispered Ted.

"The men aren't in the sinking boat," said Uncle Ben. "We saw them jump out or fall out, after they waved a white rag for help. There they go, now!" and he pointed to the

rowboat, in which were the two men pulling hard toward shore.

"Oh, ho! So that's how they are getting away, are they?" cried Mr. Blake. "We saw they had a rowboat tied on behind their motor craft. Then there came a dash of rain and we couldn't see anything more until we saw the sinking boat. So we hurried toward it, and then we saw you."

"Shall we try to catch those two men?" asked Mr. Addison. "We can easily do it in our motor boat."

"Let's first look and see if they left behind any of the money and stamps," said Mr. Blake. "If we get back what they took out of the safe I don't care so much about getting the men themselves. We can arrest them later, maybe. Let's look in the motor boat."

So the *Gull,* in which were the Curlytops with their father and Uncle Ben, and the other motor boat, in which rode Mr. Blake and Mr. Addison, steered toward the sinking craft. And no sooner had Ted looked over the side of the boat which was half sunk, than he cried:

"I see a satchel!"

"And I see a box!" added Janet.

"Maybe that's the post-office stuff!" cried Mr. Blake.

Going close to the boat, half full of water, from which the two men had jumped, or been tipped out, Mr. Blake lifted out the satchel. It was opened, and inside were stamps and some money.

"This is the stuff the burglars took from the post-office!" cried Mr. Addison.

"Good!" exclaimed his friend. "They didn't have time to take it with them in the rowboat."

"Maybe they were afraid to get the stamps wet," suggested Teddy. "Stamps get sticky in the water."

"So they do," replied Uncle Ben. "Well, anyhow, the robbers left behind them the stuff they took. Now do you want to chase after them?" he asked Mr. Blake.

"It's too late!" said Mr. Addison, pointing across the lake. "They are going to land on the shore now, a mile away. We'll have to get them later, if we can."

"Then let's try now!" shouted Mr. Blake. "Might as well! Here, I'll take the satchel of money and stamps in my boat," he said to Daddy Martin. "We'll keep on after the burglars, and if you think it won't sink all

the way down, you might tow this motor boat over to your dock," and he nodded to the craft in which the burglars had been riding before the accident happened.

"All right," answered the father of the Curlytops. "I'll tow this motor boat back to my dock. But there's a queer box in it. Do you want to take that with you? Maybe that has some money and stamps in it."

"No, it seems to be empty," said Mr. Blake, leaning over and lifting up the queer box, which was made of wood. "I guess this wasn't taken from the post-office," he said. "The burglars may have stolen it somewhere else. We'll leave that in their boat. Maybe they stole the boat, too. Tow it to shore, Mr. Martin—that and the box and we'll keep on after the burglars."

So while Mr. Blake and Mr. Addison, in their motor boat, puffed on toward the place where the two men had landed in their row-boat, Daddy Martin and Uncle Ben fastened a rope from the half sunken craft to their *Gull.* Then they began slowly towing it back across Silver Lake. But not before Daddy Martin had lifted out the queer, wooden box.

So much had happened, and there was so much to talk about, that no one paid much at-

tention to this box. It was not until the Curlytops and the others had landed at the Sunnyside dock that any one thought of the box. The motor boat from which the burglars had jumped was made fast to the pier, in shallow water, so that if it sunk completely it could easily be got up again. But it seemed to want to sink only half way.

"My, you've had a lot of adventures!" exclaimed Mother Martin, when she heard all that had happened. "I wonder if they got the robbers?"

"No, they got away," answered Uncle Ben, who had gone out to a telephone to inquire. "The robbers got away, but we got back the money and stamps they took."

"And the queer box, too," added Ted.

"What queer box is that?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Why, one we found in the wrecked motor boat," her husband answered. "Here it is. I haven't had time to look at it."

As he spoke he handed the box to his wife. It was square, and made of some light and finely polished wood.

"Why!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin, as she looked at the queer box, "do you know what I think this is?"

"What?" asked her husband.

"I think it's the same queer box that was stolen from Mrs. Ransom," was the answer. "I remember what she told me about it. I never saw it, that I remember, though I may have. But I'm sure this is the same one she told about as being taken from her store the time it was robbed."

"It does look like it," agreed Mr. Martin, as he took the box again for a second examination. "Yes, I believe it is," he added. "Then the same burglars that broke into Mrs. Ransom's store must have robbed the post-office."

"We had better send word to Mrs. Ransom that we have a box like the one taken from her," went on Mrs. Martin. "We could send it to her, or ask her to come here and look at it. Maybe the deputy sheriff, Mr. Addison, would rather we kept the box here until he sees if he can catch the robbers."

"Maybe," agreed Mr. Martin. "We could ask Mrs. Ransom to come and visit us for a few days, and show her the box then."

"We'll do that!" decided his wife.

So it happened that, about two days later, Mrs. Ransom came to Silver Lake to spend a few days at Sunnyside. The post-office

burglars were not caught, but all the money and stamps they had taken were found in the boat which they left after it seemed to be sinking. But it did not sink, and later on it was mended and made almost as good as new. It had been stolen from a boatman near the Point, and he was glad to get it back.

In one of the lockers of the boat were found some of the knives stolen from Mr. Henderson's store in Cresco. The burglars had gone about, breaking into many places, it was believed. The Curlytops remembered about the man who had hoisted the sail for Ted, the time he was blown out into the lake, and it was thought perhaps he might have been one of the bad men, but this was never found out for certain.

Mr. Henderson was glad to get back his stolen knives.

"And I imagine you're glad to get the queer box that your brother, the sailor, gave you, back, aren't you, Mrs. Ransom?" asked Mrs. Martin, when the storekeeper had come to Silver Lake.

"Yes, indeed, I am glad to get it back," said Mrs. Ransom. "And I'd be more glad if I could find my brother who gave it to me

—my brother who has been gone so many years. But I don't suppose I ever shall. Did they find any of my other things that the burglars took when they robbed my store?"

"No, the queer box was the only thing they left behind in the boat, besides the knives, the post-office money and the stamps," replied Mr. Martin.

"Well, well! I guess I'm lucky to get my brother's box back—it has his picture in it, and some trinkets," went on Mrs. Ransom. "And I hear you Curlytops got back your dog from the Gypsies," she added.

"Yes, we got Skyrocket back," answered Ted. "And we're sorry we couldn't get the burglars that robbed your store."

"Oh, well, we can't have everything we want," said Mrs. Ransom. "I'm glad it was no worse."

Mrs. Ransom turned over and over in her hands the queer box which she feared she would never see again. She was very glad to get it back.

"I declare I've forgotten how to open it!" she said with a laugh, as she looked at it on all sides. "There's a secret drawer in it, and I was just trying to find it. I was won-

dering whether the burglars took out my brother's picture and the trinkets I kept so many years. I wonder if the box is empty."

"Let me see," said Uncle Ben, reaching out his hand for the box. He shook it as he held it close to his ear.

"There's something inside," he said.

"But you can't get it out unless you know how to open the secret top and drawer," said Mrs. Ransom. "My brother showed me how a good many years ago, but, I declare! I seem to have forgotten."

And then a funny thing happened. All at once, as Uncle Ben held the queer box, there was a click, and it opened. A small drawer shot out, and in it was a picture of a man, and also some little curiosities, pink shells, red sea beans and bits of coral.

"There you are, Mrs. Ransom!" said Uncle Ben. "I've opened the queer box for you."

"Why, why, how did you do it?" cried the storekeeper. "I thought nobody but my brother and I and the Japanese man that made the box knew how to open it. How did you know?" and she looked in a strange way at Uncle Ben. "How did you know?" she asked again.

"Why, I—I don't exactly know," was his answer in a strange voice. "It seemed to come to me all at once. I just pressed on a secret spring, under this queer, carved flower, and the box opened. As soon as I had it in my hands I remembered that I had heard of this box once before."

"Are you—no, it isn't possible that you can be my lost brother!" said Mrs. Ransom. "You don't look a bit as he used to look, though I suppose he has changed after all these years. But how did you know the secret of his box?"

"What was your brother's name?" asked Uncle Ben.

"John Dowd," was the woman's answer. "Dowd was my name before I married. Yes, John Dowd was my brother. But I'm afraid I'll never see him again. I'm glad to get back the box he gave me, but I suppose he has been dead many years."

"No, he hasn't, either!" suddenly cried Uncle Ben, springing to his feet. "It all comes back to me now! It all comes back! I know how I remembered the secret of the box, too."

"But you aren't my brother!" cried Mrs. Ransom.

"No. But I have seen your brother, and not less than a few months ago, in New York when I was sick there. He was sick in the same hospital; but he got better before I did, and he left to go on a ship. But before that he got to talking of different things, and he told me about a queer box he once owned. It was this same box, I'm sure, and he told me how to open it by pressing below the carved flower. He made a little picture of the box. It looked just like this.

"That's how I happened to remember, and how I knew how to open your box," he went on. "As soon as I had it in my hands it seemed to me as if I had seen it before. But it was because your brother told me about it, and told me just how to open it."

The Curlytops were listening to all this, and so were Tom and Lola and all the others.

"Oh, can you tell me where my brother is now?" eagerly asked Mrs. Ransom.

"Well, I can tell you where I saw him last —in the New York Hospital," answered Uncle Ben. "It was there he told me about the queer box he said he had given to his sister. But he said he had not heard from her for a good many years, and he thought she was dead."

"And I thought he was dead!" cried the storekeeper. "And instead we're both alive —at least, I hope John is," she murmured softly.

"Well, he was getting well and strong when he left the hospital," said Uncle Ben. "Perhaps if you write there, they can tell you on what ship he sailed. I'm sure it's the same John Dowd who was your brother, for surely there wouldn't be two of the same name who had given their sisters queer boxes with secret drawers."

"Did he look anything like that?" asked Mrs. Ransom, as she held out the photograph which had been in the secret drawer of the queer box.

"He didn't look like that when I saw him in the hospital," answered Uncle Ben. "But of course that picture was taken a good many years ago."

"Yes, it was," said Mrs. Ransom. "It's been a good while since John gave me the queer box and sailed away. I supposed he was shipwrecked between that time and the present."

"Yes, he was shipwrecked, he told me," replied Uncle Ben. "He said he wished he could find his sister, but as he did not tell me

your name, of course I did not know you were she."

"Well, maybe it will turn out all right after all," said Daddy Martin. "We must write to the hospital and find out."

And this was done. About a week later the answer came back, giving the name of the ship on which John Dowd had sailed. And, later, when Mrs. Ransom sent a letter to the place where the ship had voyaged to, back an answer came from her brother.

"Oh, I've found him! I've found him!" Mrs. Ransom wrote to Mrs. Martin when the joyful news came in the letter, for, of course, she had gone back to Cresco by that time. "I've found my brother! He is in England, but he will soon be coming back here. Oh, how glad I am."

"And if the burglars hadn't taken the queer box, and if Uncle Ben hadn't known how to open it, maybe she never would have seen her brother," said Teddy.

"That's right—maybe I wouldn't," agreed Mrs. Ransom when Teddy repeated that to her later. "But now I have found him, I'm almost glad the burglars robbed me. They can keep the other things they took as long as I have my brother back."

In less than a month John Dowd came sailing back. He was glad to see his sister again, of that you may be sure, and he was very glad to meet, once again, Uncle Ben, and to see the queer box.

"And now everything is found!" said Janet when the long-missing sailor and his sister had come out to Silver Lake to spend a day or two. "We even got our dog back!"

"But we didn't find the robbers," said Uncle Ben. "They got away."

"Tom and I are going to hunt 'em after we get back home," declared Ted. "Aren't we, Tom?"

"Sure!" was the answer. "And maybe we'll find another place they robbed, and get back the stuff they took."

"You'd better go and find Uncle Ben and ask him to take you all fishing!" laughed Mother Martin.

"Take me, too!" begged Trouble. "Me want fiss!"

"Yes, take Trouble with you, but don't lose him," said his mother.

"Come on!" cried Ted. "We'll go fishing with Uncle Ben!"

They went out in the motor boat, the Curlytops, Tom, Lola and Trouble. On the

porch of the bungalow sat Mr. and Mrs. Martin, and Mrs. Ransom and her brother, John Dowd.

"How strange everything came about," said Mrs. Martin. "There was the robbery of your store, Mrs. Ransom, the finding of Uncle Ben on our lawn, Skyrocket being taken by the Gypsies, and the finding of your brother's queer box in the wrecked boat."

"Yes, and then I found my brother!" said Mrs. Ransom softly, as she looked at him. "That was best of all!"

The Curlytops stayed at Silver Lake quite a while longer, until it was time to go back to school, and they had many good times on the water with Uncle Ben.

And now, as this story is finished, we will say good-bye for a time, though I hope you will meet the Curlytops again, and hear more of their adventures.

THE END

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